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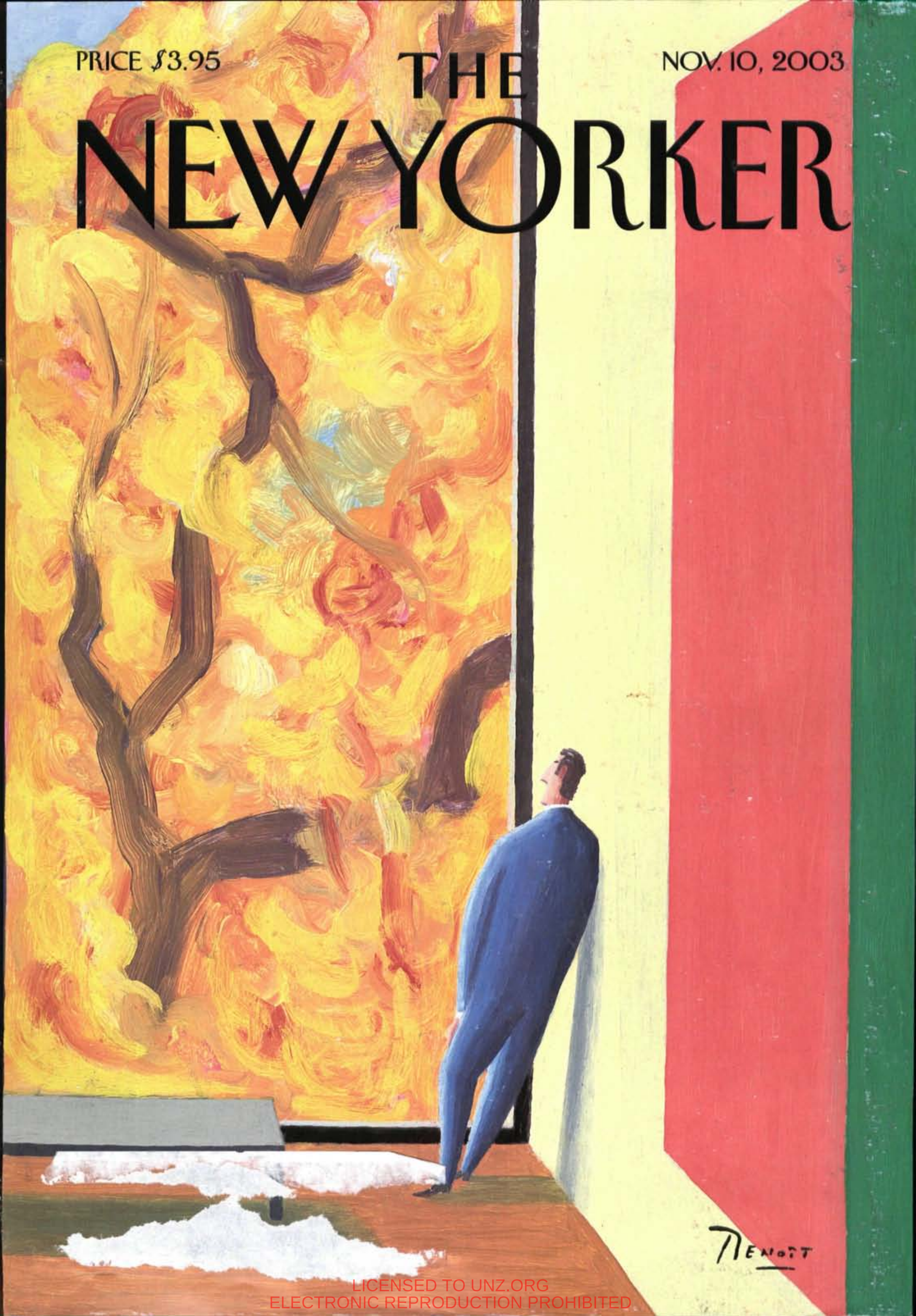

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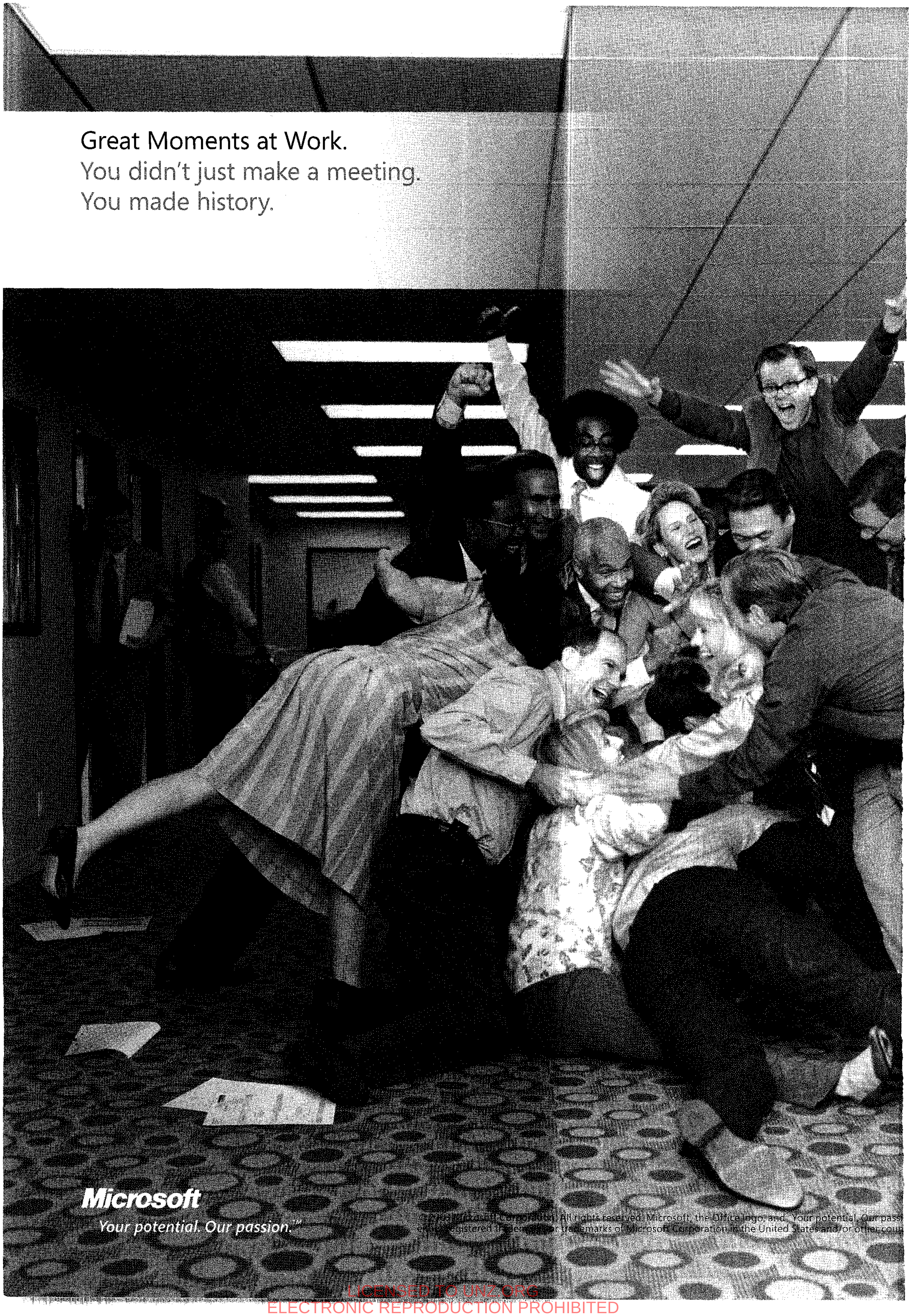
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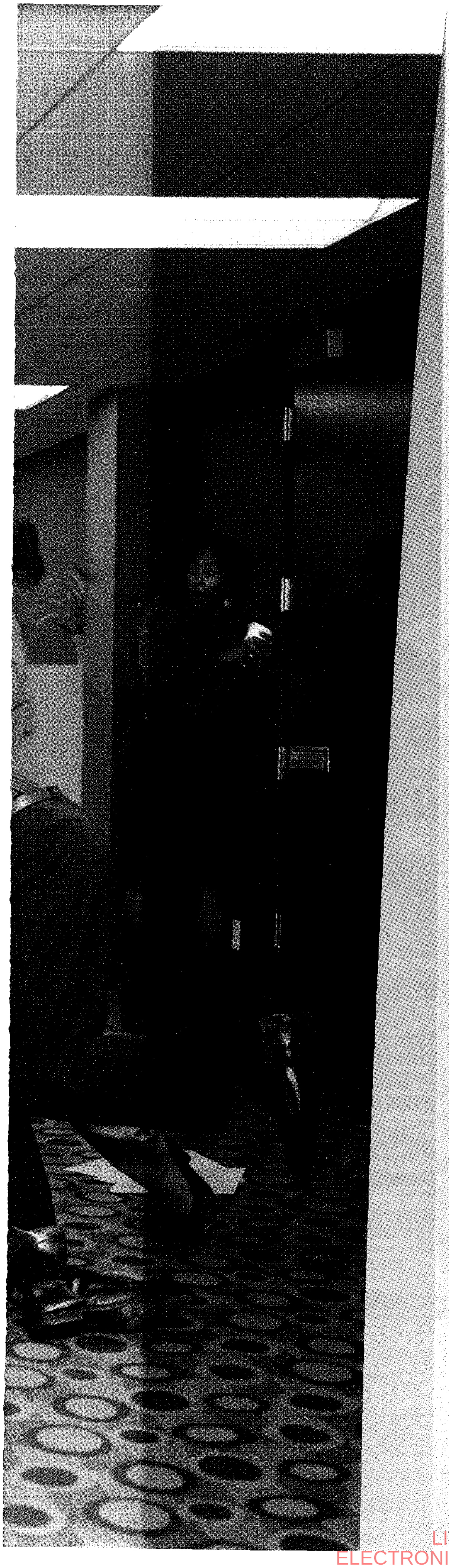

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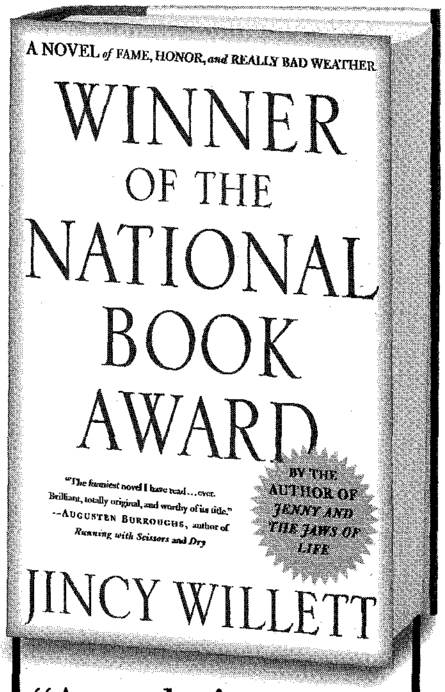
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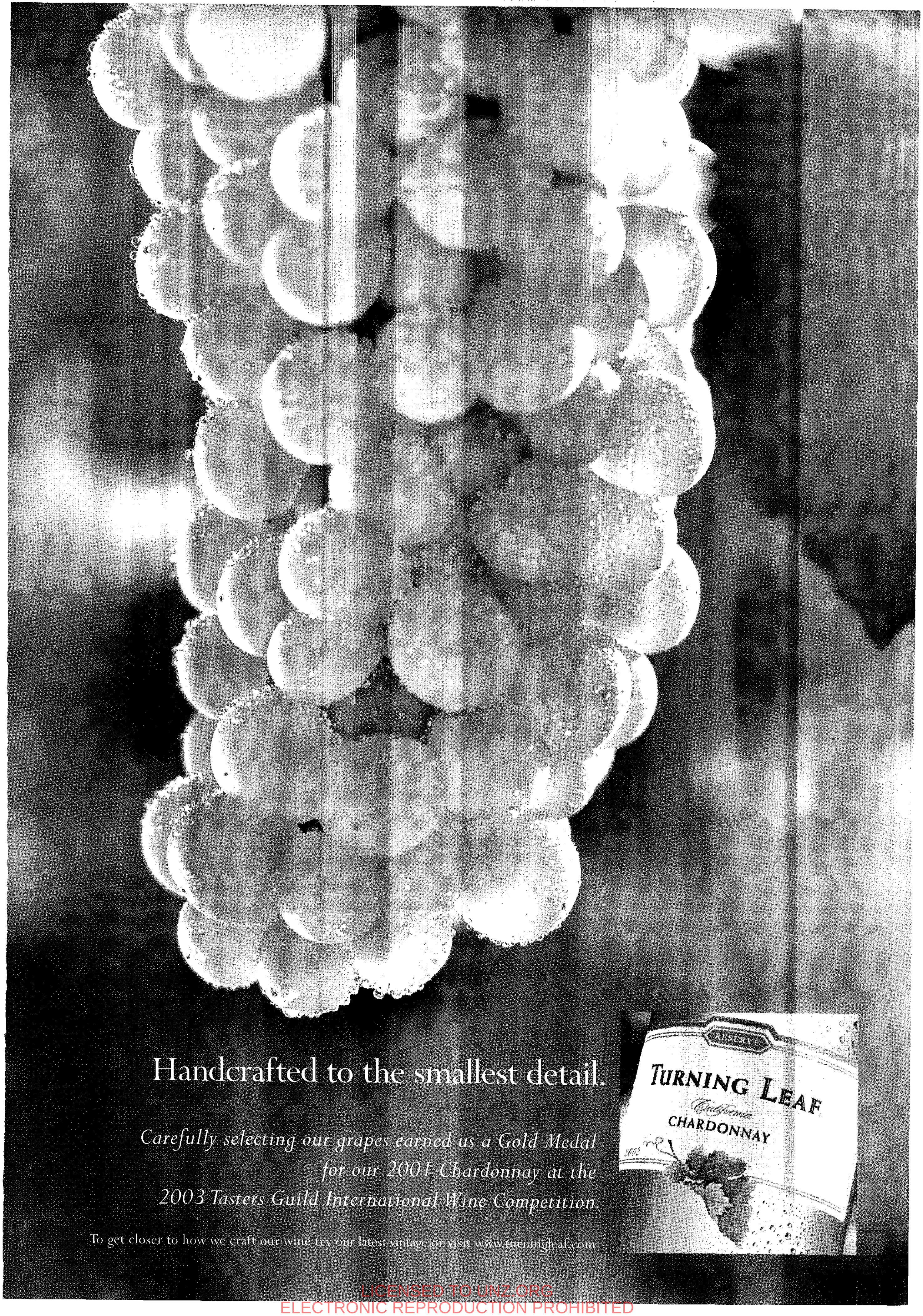
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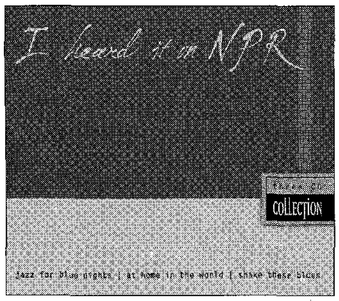
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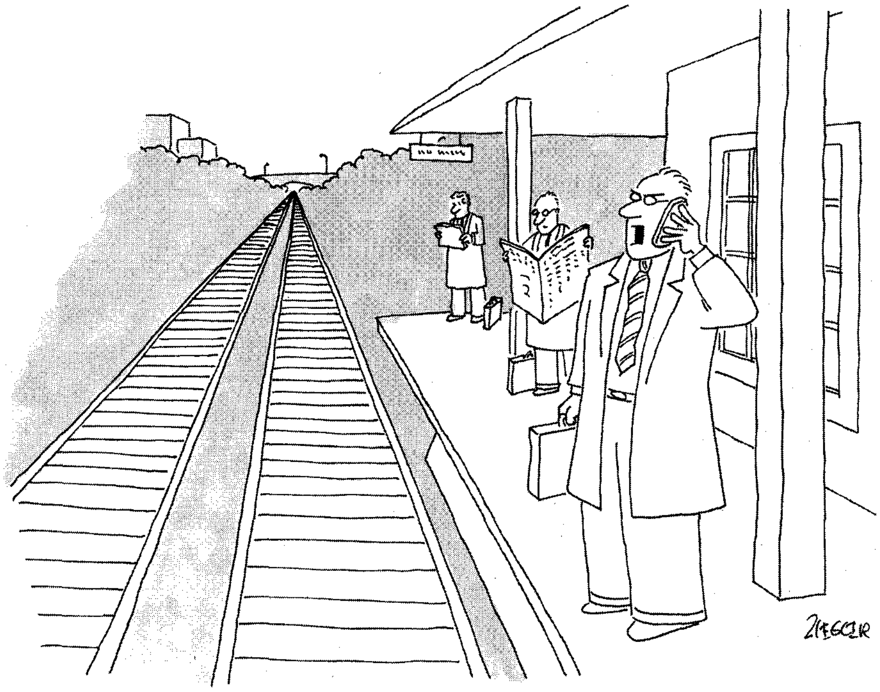
Arnold Roth (The Back Page, p. 130) is a cartoonist and has been a contributor since 1992. ♦



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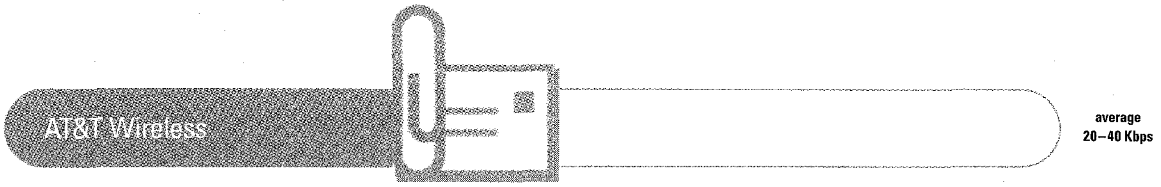

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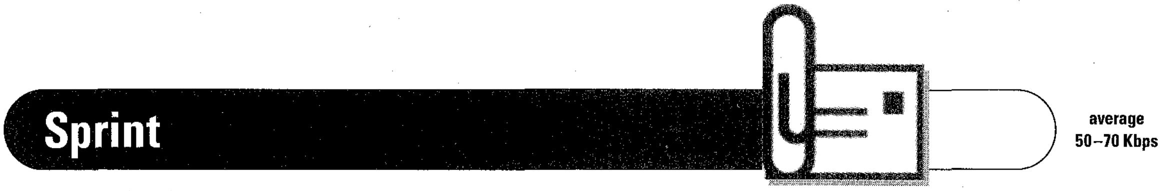

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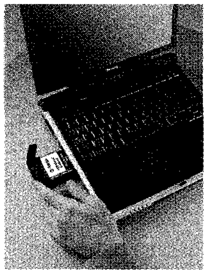

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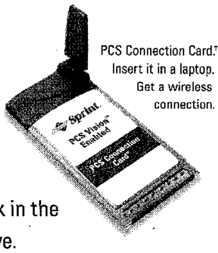

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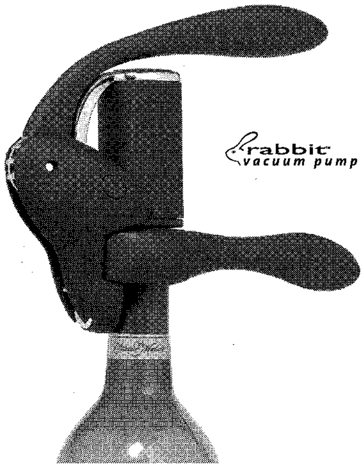

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YOUR NAME IN LIGHTS

Tad Friend, in his article on screenwriting-credit disputes, quotes Susannah Grant, the first writer on "Erin Brockovich," as saying, "It's incredibly painful and galling for people to say that the best work you ever did was done by somebody else" ("Credit Grab," October 20th). But no one is saying that. Grant *did* write "Erin Brockovich." She just didn't write it alone. Those involved in the film's production believed that Grant and I should share credit. It was Grant who sought arbitration to eliminate my name. Julia Roberts thanked me in her Oscar speech in the spirit of fairness. Most working screenwriters I know applaud her for this. I don't want credit for Grant's work. Why should she take credit—not to mention residual payments—for mine?
Richard LaGravenese
New York City

Friend quotes the producer Brian Grazer as saying that the first drafts of "Apollo 13" had a lot of "ass-slapping in bars" and that John Sayles "wrote whatever dialogue you remember." Both of those statements are false. The two most famous lines from that movie are "Houston, we have a problem" (a line spoken during the actual mission) and "Failure is not an option." Both were in all the drafts that Al Reinert and I wrote, and if someone had his ass slapped in a bar it did not happen in our script. John Sayles did make our script better (for which I will always be grateful), but in no way did he "write" "Apollo 13." Sayles did what is known as a production polish: he skillfully fit the script to the actors, the director, and the sets. I have done this job myself; it can be crucial to a movie, but it's not exactly writing—more like what a magazine editor might do to prepare a manuscript for publication. Producers like Grazer tend to exaggerate the contribution of the rewriter they install on the set. This allows the producer, who may be devoid of writing or any other talent, to magnify his or her own contribution to the final movie. The Writers Guild of America's arbitration process is designed to make sure that these grandiose delusions are not reflected in the writing credits. In the case of "Apollo 13," it did just that.
William Broyles, Jr.
Wilson, Wyo.

Babaloo Mandel's comment that, although I received a story and a screenplay credit for "Splash," I "didn't write a word" of it ridicules me and the Writers Guild arbiters as well. I wasn't awarded two credits because I'm tall and Jewish and have good table manners. The arbiters reviewed my half-dozen drafts and the material by Mandel and his partner, Lowell Ganz, and decided accordingly.
Bruce Jay Friedman
New York City

SYLVIA IN THE KITCHEN

Anthony Lane, in his review of "Sylvia," admits that he has a "constitutional aversion" to Sylvia Plath's poetry, which he consigns to "a country for young men, and, more obsessively, for young women." Watching the movie, he finds himself wondering if she might have been happier had she stuck with baking the "scrumptious"-looking cakes she produces to cope with her writer's block: "We would have missed the poetry, but, if Sylvia's icing is anything to go by, we might have gained a rival to Betty Crocker." Here Lane overlooks one of Plath's important contributions—her meticulous investigation of the constraining cultural ideals of femininity, motherhood, and domesticity. More significant, contemporary poets, Hughes included, owe an enormous debt to the well-crafted poems and haunting rhythms of her "Ariel."
Susan McCabe
Associate Professor of English
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, Calif.

•

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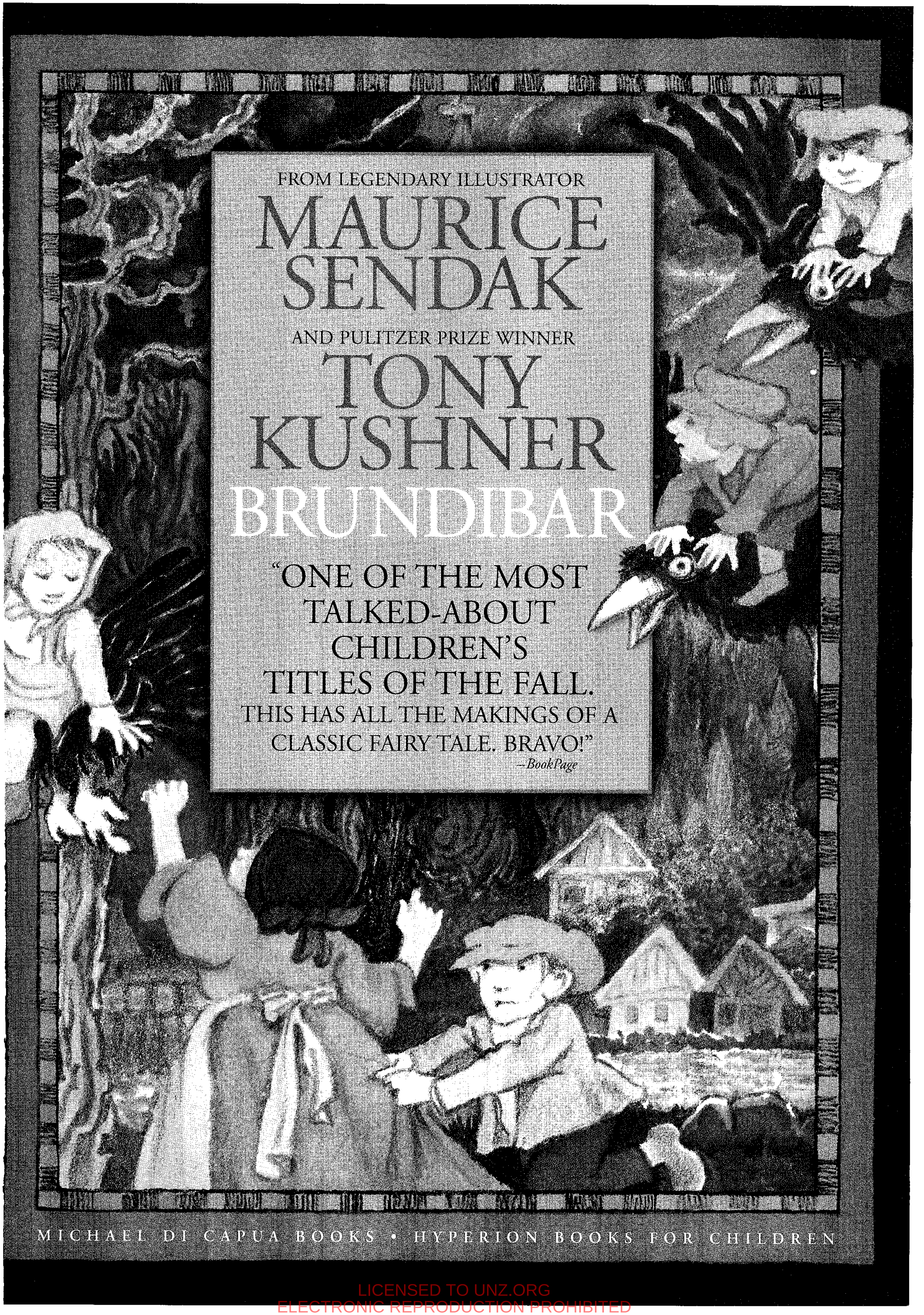

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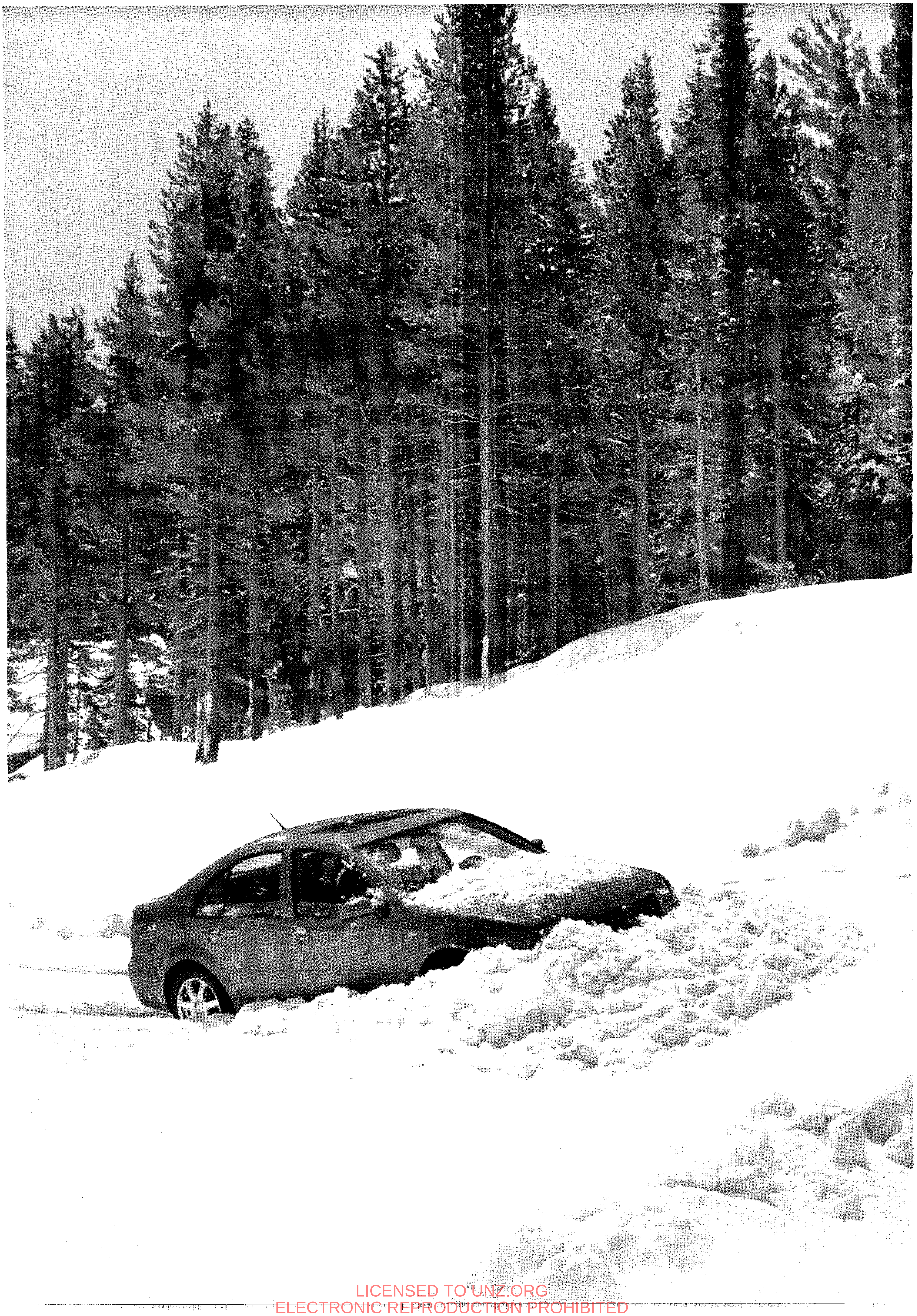

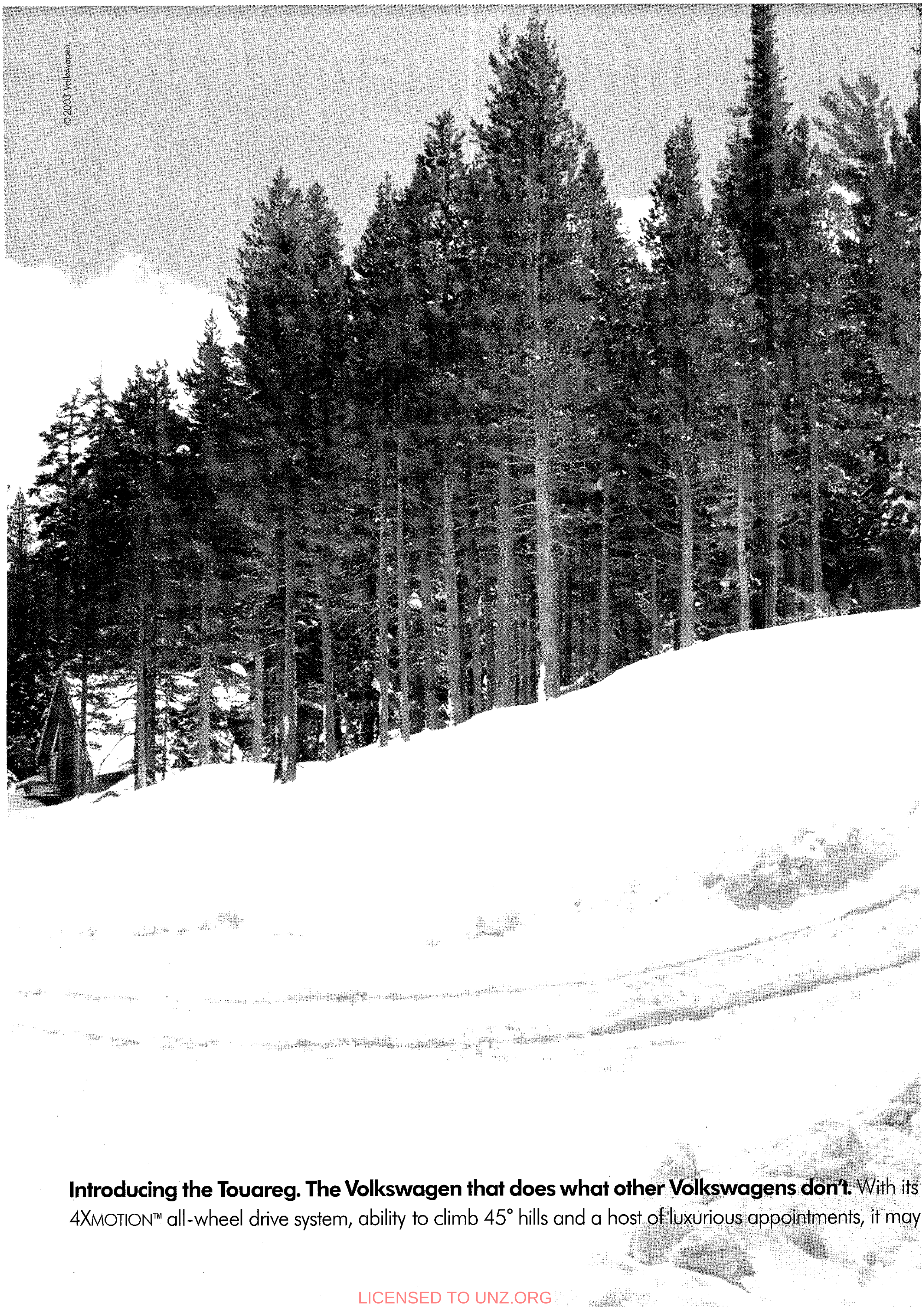

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ANNA IN THE TROPICS
Nilo Cruz's Pulitzer Prize-winning play about a man who reads Tolstoy to workers in a Cuban cigar factory stars Jimmy Smits and Daphne Rubin-Vega. Directed by Emily Mann. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BOBBI BOLAND
Farrah Fawcett stars in a comedy by Nancy Hasty, about a former Miss Florida who teaches charm and deportment to young women in a small Florida town. Directed by David Esbjornson. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

BRIGHT IDEAS
In a satire by Eric Coble, pushy suburban parents will stop at nothing to get their child into a selective preschool. John Rando directs. In previews. (East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE CARETAKER
The Roundabout presents a revival of Harold Pinter's breakthrough play, from 1960, starring Patrick Stewart, Kyle MacLachlan, and Aidan Gillen. Directed by David Jones. Two previews on Nov. 8. Opens Nov. 9 at 6:30. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

CAROLINE, OR CHANGE
Tony Kushner's new musical, with music by Jeanine Tesori, is set in Louisiana in 1963 and tells the story of the friendship between a black maid and the son of the Jewish family she works for. Directed by George C. Wolfe. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

FAME ON 42ND STREET
The movie that became a television series now becomes a musical, with a book by José Fernandez, lyrics by Jacques Levy, and music by Steve Margoshes. Directed by Drew Scott Harris and choreographed by Lars Bethke. In previews. Opens Nov. 11 at 6:30. (Little Shubert, 422 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

I AM MY OWN WIFE
Doug Wright's one-man play about a real-life German transvestite who survived the Nazis and the Communists—with all parts brilliantly played by Jefferson Mays—jumps to Broadway after a successful Off Broadway run. Directed by Moisés Kaufman. Previews begin Nov. 11. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

JACKIE MASON'S LAUGHING ROOM ONLY
He's back. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-7171.)

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LEGACY CODES
Pan Asian Rep presents a play by Cherylene Lee inspired by the Wen Ho Lee case, about a Taiwan-born physicist who is suspected of compromising American national security. Directed by Ron Nakahara. Opens Nov. 5 at 7. (West End, 263 W. 86th St. 212-279-4200.)

NEVER GONNA DANCE
A new musical based on the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers vehicle "Swing Time," featuring the music of Jerome Kern. Directed by Michael Greif. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

OLDEST LIVING CONFEDERATE WIDOW TELLS ALL
Ellen Burstyn stars in an adaptation by Martin Tahse of Allan Gurganus's saga about a hundred-year-old woman's memories of her long life. Directed by Don Scardino. In previews. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

SEXAHOLIX: A LOVE STORY
John Leguizamo returns to Broadway with an update of his comic one-man show. Opens Nov. 11 at 8. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

TABOO
In a musical about the London club scene of the early eighties, Euan Morton plays the pop star Boy George and Boy George himself (a.k.a. George O'Dowd) plays the performance artist Leigh Bowery. With a book adapted for the American stage by Charles Busch and music by O'Dowd. Directed by Christopher Renshaw. In previews. (Plymouth, 235 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE VIOLET HOUR
A new play by Richard Greenberg ("Take Me Out"), about a young publisher and a mysterious machine, stars Robert Sean Leonard, Robin Miles, Scott Foley, Dagmara Dominczyk, and Mario Cantone. Directed by Evan Yionoulis. In previews. Opens Nov. 6 at 6:45. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

THE BOY FROM OZ
The charming, wildly hardworking performer Hugh Jackman has been put in the awkward position of having to prove that the Australian singer-songwriter Peter Allen—who was discovered by Judy Garland and who married her daughter Liza Minnelli—is worthy of our attention. Just this side of overly hunky, Jackman is a dream of sweetness. He does everything he can to sell the show, and the girls in the audience love him. But the production that swirls around him undermines him. He is never allowed to build on Allen's quieter moments, and nearly all the other actors try to upstage him—as if they had better things to do than engage with the star. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/27/03.) (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF
Ashley Judd, Jason Patric, and Ned Beatty star in a new production of Tennessee Williams's drama, directed by Anthony Page. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

FOREIGN AIDS
The South African satirist Pieter Dirk-Uys opens his one-man show by pondering why so many of his countrymen are dying of "natural causes"—the African National Congress's preferred euphemism for AIDS. Playing a number of characters—an Afrikaner matron named Evita Bezuidenhout, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Nelson Mandela, who discusses the epidemic while dancing in a flashy shirt—Dirk-Uys spares no one. "Where the hell is Africa in this newspaper?" he says, holding out a copy of the *Times*. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Closes Nov. 9.)

IRON
In Rona Munro's new play, a young woman visits her mother, imprisoned for killing her father, after an absence of fifteen years. The interactions of the two women as each tries to envision all that she's missed and misunderstood form the core of the play. Munro's crystal-clear writing reveals the universal in the specific without ever seeming obvious. A powerhouse performance by Lisa Emery, as the mother, propels the drama. Directed by Anna D. Shapiro. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE LONG CHRISTMAS RIDE HOME
A new play by Paula Vogel ("How I Learned to Drive") tells the story of three siblings who hurtle into the future after a post-Christmas-dinner car accident. Randy Graff and Enid Graham lead the cast. Directed by Mark Brokaw. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

LYSISTRATA
Aristophanes's comic classic about antiwar wives gets a timely update by the late David Lee Jiranek in a new production at the Jean Cocteau Repertory. Directed by David Fuller. (Bouwerie Lane, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 212-677-0060.)

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE
Shakespeare's drama joins "The Rivals" in rotating repertory at The Pearl. Directed by Shepard Sobel. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

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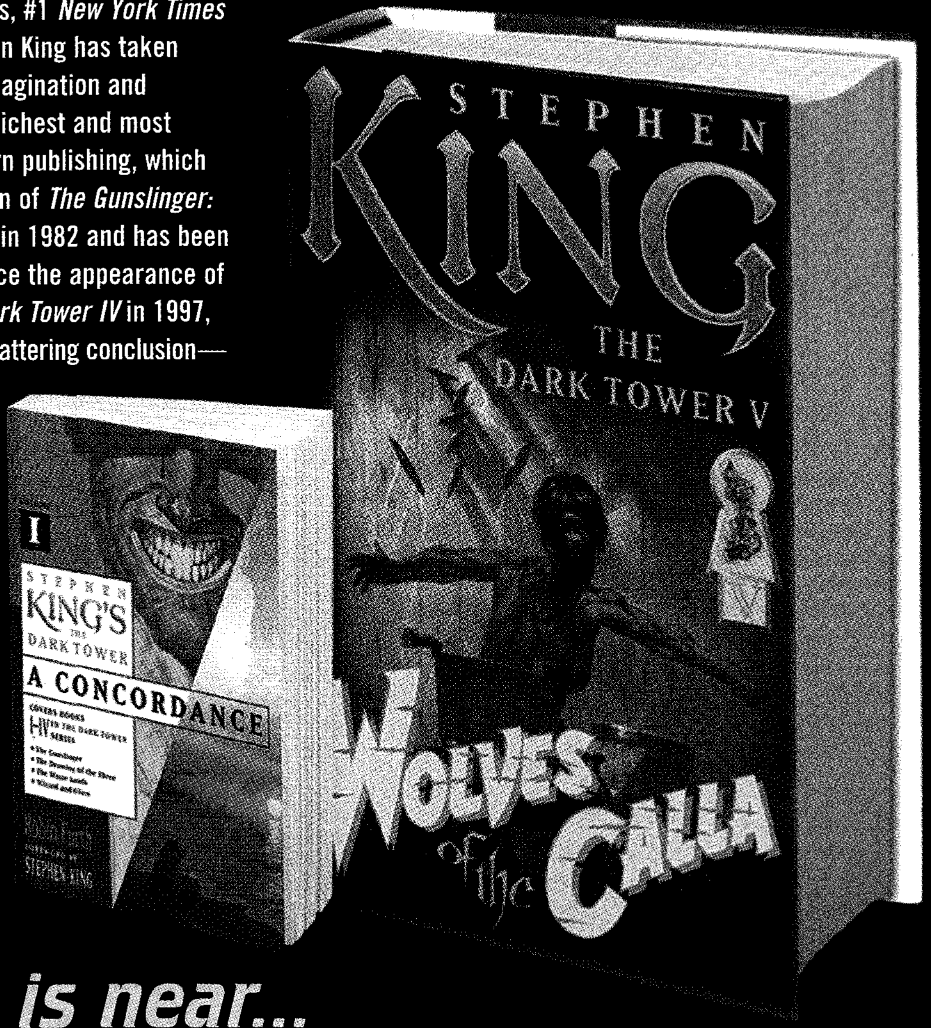
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year feud with the Boss in this one-man play starring Ben Gazzara. Thomas Lysaght's script serves up plenty of famous Yogi-isms ("You can observe a lot by watching"), and Gazzara hits for average, if not for power. The Berra family has refused to endorse the show, but Gazzara has Yogi down, from his head-scratching wit to his pigeon-toed gait. Directed by Paul Linke. (Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

OMNIUM GATHERUM
The intention of Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros's witty, pugnacious play, which opens to the sound of a low-flying chopper and the sight of a sumptuous Manhattan dinner party, is to punch the lights out of every intellectual pose. Under the confident and precocious direction of Will Frears, "Omnium Gatherum" is full of polemicists, but it is not itself a polemic. It is, more accurately, a provocation—a show of theatrical fireworks to enlighten our darkness. (10/6/03) (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave. 212-239-6200.)

British Sea Power, a hard-rocking quintet of bright young things from Brighton, at Maxwell's (see Night Life—Clubs).

ZOHAR LAZAR

ONE FAMILY ONE CHILD ONE DOOR
Joanna Chan's acclaimed black comedy about the human cost of China's one-child policy returns to the stage for a third run. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-868-4444. Closes Nov. 23.)

PRIVATE JOKES, PUBLIC PLACES
Anthony Rapp stars in Oren Safdie's X-Acto sharp comedy about the pretense of the architectural establishment. The play, which had a brief and successful run last spring, is the inaugural production of the Theatre at the Center for Architecture. Directed by Maria Mileaf. (536 LaGuardia Pl. 212-239-6200.)

THE RETREAT FROM MOSCOW
Resignation has settled over the union of an English couple, Edward (John Lithgow), a high-school history teacher, and Alice (Eileen Atkins) in William Nicholson's powerful evocation of a dying marriage. As Lithgow plays him, Edward is a big, passive man with a small, dithering voice; he hides behind his books, his silences, and his vagueness. Alice, cunningly shaded by Atkins's keen intelligence and sense of humor, is both an appealingly batty woman and an emotional terrorist. We are told that Napoleon took four hundred and fifty thousand men into Russia and that only twenty thousand of them survived. Edward and Alice's reserved son Jamie (Ben Chaplin) may not be one of the survivors in the family battle. The play's last retreat belongs to him—a retreat from maturity. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (11/3/03) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SILVER NITRATE
A fascinating but flawed play by Cathy Caplan is built on the shaky foundation of a handful of photographs from Weimar-era Germany. Scenes that trace the fate of six photographers and their acquaintances during the early days of Hitler's rise are punctuated with tableaux that include images of a dead fish with cut daisies and of a naked woman glimpsed through lace. In a strong cast, Chandler Vinton stands out as a society woman and muse to a man who drifts into the Nazi party. Directed by Gwynn MacDonald. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 212-868-4444. Closes Nov. 16.)

SIX DANCE LESSONS IN SIX WEEKS
Polly Bergen and Mark Hamill star in a new play by Richard Alfieri, about the friendship between a Florida retiree and the dance teacher she hires, a jaded former New Yorker. Directed by Arthur Allan Seidelman. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

TATJANA IN COLOR
The Culture Project presents a splendid, subversive new play by Julia Jordan, set in Austria in 1912, about a scandal surrounding the artist Egon Schiele and a headstrong young girl who modelled for him. Directed by Will Pomerantz. (45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN
In Darko Tresnjak's audacious production of the tragedy by Shakespeare and John Fletcher, two weddings steeped in blood begin and end the action and are separated by snatches of homoerotic love talk, a prison escape, and a tacit rape. Arcite (David Harbour) and Palamon (Graham Hamilton)—the kinsmen of the title, estranged by their competitive passion for the Amazon Emilia (Doan Ly)—engage in stirring swordplay, two feet from the front row. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

WICKED
Kristin Chenoweth and Idina Menzel star in a new musical based on Gregory Maguire's novel about the witches of Oz. Directed by Joe Mantello. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.)

WILDER
In Erin Cressida Wilson's new "chamber musical," an old man looks back on his sexual awakening as a Depression-scarred denizen of a Colorado brothel. The evening offers plaintive Appalachian sounds, the acting of John Cullum, and the sensual presence of Lacey Kohl, but the piquant parts are richer than the theatrical whole. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Closes Nov. 14.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.

BECKETT/ALBEE
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.

BEYOND RECOGNITION
Abingdon Theatre Arts Complex, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.

CARNIVAL KNOWLEDGE
SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-239-6200.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 212-239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

GOLDA'S BALCONY
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

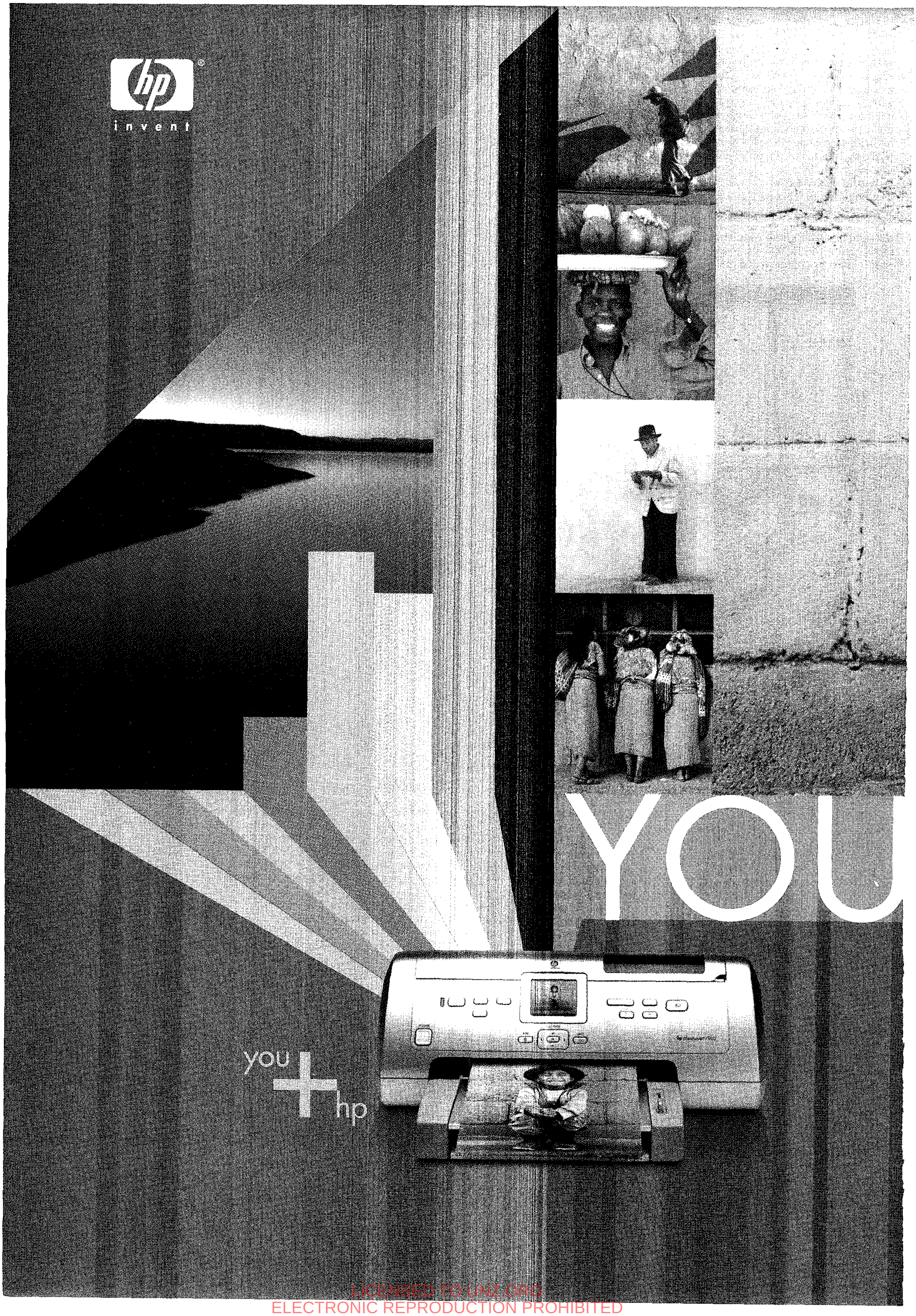
GYPSY
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

KIKI AND HERB: COUP DE THÉÂTRE
Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St., between Bedford and Hudson Sts. 212-239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS
Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.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LIFE IS NOT A DRESS REHEARSAL.

YAHOO! News

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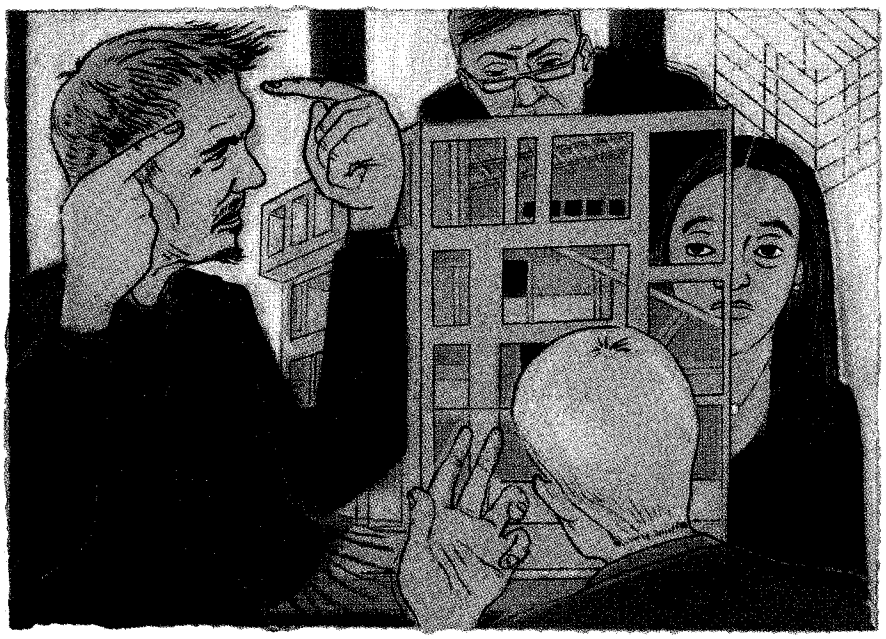
MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.
MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.
THE NIGHT HERON
Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Nov. 9.)
NINE
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.



A satire about architects, "Private Jokes, Public Places," now playing Off Broadway.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-921-8000.
THE RIVALS
Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.
ROUNDING THIRD
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 212-477-2477.
TAKE ME OUT
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.
THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.
URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
The company's season at City Center winds down with dances by Sir Frederick Ashton, Antony Tudor, Martha Graham, Marius Petipa, and others. ♦ Nov. 5 at 7:30 and Nov. 7 at 8: "Diversion of Angels," "Symphonic Variations," "Pillar of Fire," and "Raymonda (Grand Pas Classique)." ♦ Nov. 6 and Nov. 8 at 8: "Petite Mort," "Sechs Tänze," and "Dorian." ♦ Nov. 8-9 at 2 (family matinée): "Theme and Variations," "Le Grand Pas de Deux," "Three Virgins and a Devil," "Flames of Paris Pas de Deux," and "Fancy Free." ♦ Nov. 9 at 7:30: "Without Words," "workwithinwork," and "Within You Without You: A Tribute to George Harrison." (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

GEORGE PIPER DANCES
Dancing is a sport to Michael George Nunn and William Piper Trevitt, two British dancers who have been attracting new audiences to the ballet since 1999, when they documented their last months at the Royal Ballet with a candid and raucous video, "Ballet Boyz." They then formed a breakaway modern-ballet company, and this week the troupe (which has three male and two female dancers) shows off its much hyped mojo in its New York début. Nunn and Trevitt face off in Russell Maliphant's duet "Torsion," and the whole company joins them in a première of Christopher Wheeldon's "Mesmerics" and in "Steptext," by William Forsythe, the only American choreographer they've requisitioned a dance from thus far. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 4-8 at 8 and Nov. 9 at 2 and 7:30.)

ROSEANNE SPRADLIN DANCE
Walter Dundervill, Athena Malloy, and Tasha Taylor are mostly naked in a restaged production of Spradlin's Bessie-winning trio, "under/world." Inspired by photographs of New York's fetish scene, Spradlin makes the nudity matter-of-fact, not prurient. A head lolls into a lap, a hand pulls down a pair of underpants, a dancer scooches across the floor on a rhinestone leash, defusing rather than intensifying taboos. There's also a new piece, "Rearrangement (Or a Spell for Mortals)," in which Dundervill and Malloy perform linked activities until one of them abruptly stops, leaving the lone sound of a fist on a thigh, or a book falling, to resound. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Nov. 6-8 at 8. Through Nov. 15.)

BALLET HISPANICO
Over the decades, part of Tina Ramirez's mission as artistic director of the company has been to show the breadth of Latin dance. "NightClub," a new work in three sections, does so with gusto, if not much imagination. The piece—with a tango, a mambo, and a modern techno salsa, choreographed by Graciela Daniele, Alexandre Magno, and Sergio Trujillo, respectively—moves from a nineteen-twenties Buenos Aires brothel to a nineteen-fifties club in Spanish Harlem and ends with the present-day equivalent in seediness in New York—all settings for harmless fun. (Jack H. Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-992-8484. Nov. 11 at 8. Through Nov. 16.)

"FOOD FOR THOUGHT"
Danspace Project presents three days of performances to benefit local food-distribution programs, curated by Christopher Williams, Jeanine Durning, and Gina Gibney. A highlight of the weekend is the new work "Three Ways," choreographed by Larry Keigwin, in which businessmen dance on a mattress. Admission is five dollars and two cans of food. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Nov. 7-9 at 8:30.)

"DESCENT"
Noémie Lafrance's dizzying, spectral site-specific 2002 dance, performed along several flights of a spi-

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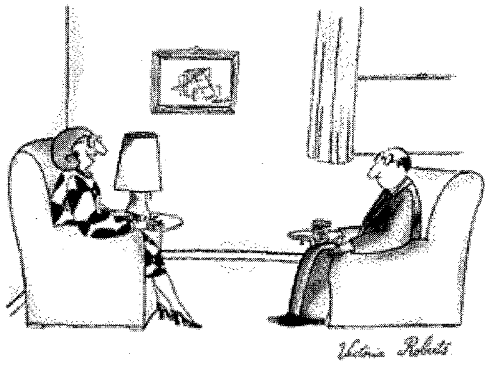

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Rebecca Mead
Ken Auletta
Larissa MacFarquhar
Lawrence Wright
Edna O'Brien
Maira Kalman
and more

AND: A calendar of *New Yorker*
events across the country

ral staircase in the Clocktower building, in Tribeca, returns for five weeks of performances. (108 Leonard St. 212-868-4444. Nov. 6 and Nov. 9 at 7 and 8:30 and Nov. 7-8 at 7, 8:30, and 10. Through Nov. 23.)

"SPLITSTREAM"
Nia Love, Ori Flomin, and Osmany Tellez share the bill in Dance Theatre Workshop's collaborative dance series. Love's "Remembrances of the Castles" alludes to the coastal castles in Ghana from which the first slaves were shipped to the West; Flomin's "Command/Shift/Delete" looks at the potential for miscommunication in the hi-tech, multitasking world; and Tellez, in "Descending Matter," explores tension and balance in space. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 6-8 at 7.)

GARTH FAGAN DANCE
Fagan is a collagist—for example, he'll paste an undulating Afro-Caribbean torso on top of a balletic turn—and his newest work, "DanceCollageForRomie," celebrates the late painter Romare Bearden, with whom he shares not only a compositional method but a favorite subject: African-American life. Set to the music of Shostakovich, Villa-Lobos, and Jelly Roll Morton, the dance forms a patchwork of odd, lovely shapes. With last year's "Translation Transition" and sections from Fagan's 1991 collaboration with Wynton Marsalis, "Griot New York." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 11 at 8. Through Nov. 23.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA
The tenth-anniversary performances of Martin Santangelo's Madrid-based company. His six musicians are male, but the three dancers are women, one of them Santangelo's wife, Soledad Barrio, whose dancing exemplifies the authenticity, ardor, and depth of the troupe's pared-down aesthetic. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-239-6200. Nov. 4-7 at 8, Nov. 8 at 3 and 8, and Nov. 9 at 3. Through Nov. 30.)

HUBBARD STREET 2
The young offshoot of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago makes its début at the Joyce SoHo with a series of vignettes set to music by Les Yeux Noirs, the Chieftains, Betty, and Randy Newman. (155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. Nov. 6-7 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

HANSON
Once contemporary pop's answer to Macaulay Culkin, the fresh-faced trio of blond brothers hit it big with "MMMbop" but ran out of luck as they grew up. Though the group has yet to match its earlier success in its newly mature incarnation, Hanson is in the midst of an ambitious all-acoustic tour. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 5 at 7:30.)

"OMEGA"
This show, which has never before been performed in the United States, features the noted Spanish flamenco singer Enrique Morente and the Spanish rock band Lagartija Nick. Paying tribute to the New York City poetry of Federico García Lorca and the music of Leonard Cohen, "Omega" combines more traditional flamenco (poignant guitar picking, hand clapping) with elements of progressive rock (power chords, a light show). (See also Above and Beyond.) (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Nov. 5 and Nov. 7-8 at 8.)

HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ
The vibraphone owes its existence on the jazz playing field to the legendary Lionel Hampton, who died in 2002. Saluting the irrepressible entertainer and Swing Era giant will be the veteran vibraphonist **Terry Gibbs,** a voluble player who seems to have channelled the animated spirit of his main inspiration. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. Nov. 6 at 8.)

LYLE LOVETT
The literate, ironic Texan returns with songs from "My Baby Don't Tolerate," his first album of new material in seven years. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 6 at 8.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
A night of solo piano with **César Camargo Mariano** and **Hilton Ruiz.** (Kaplan Penthouse, 165 W. 65th St. 212-721-6500. Nov. 6-8 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Nov. 6 at 8: The institute's "Interpretations" series brings together the jazz pianist **Dave Burrell** and the bassist **Tyrone Brown** for a series of atonal duets. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St.) Nov. 7 at 8: The Jamaican-born Junior (Gabu) Wedderburn, the longtime lead percussionist for Broadway's "Lion King," explores the roots of reggae music with his ten-member group **Ancient Vibrations.** (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) Nov. 8 at 8: The New York City-based ensemble **Ologunde** offers an evening of music and dance from the Bahia region of Brazil. (Symphony Space.) (For more information about all shows, call 212-545-7536.)

ALKALINE TRIO
More cynical than their fellow pop-punk revivalists, Chicago's Alkaline Trio retain the bleeding pathos of the currently in-vogue emo contingent but offset plaintiveness with a bit more grit and gallows humor (album titles include "From Here to Infirmary" and "Good Mourning"). (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. Nov. 7 at 6:45.)

RICKIE LEE JONES
On Jones's new album, "The Evening of My Best Day," the post-beat chanteuse casts a captivating spell. But all is far from dreamy, as the album confronts the issues of the day: one song is called "Tell Somebody (Repeal the Patriot Act)." (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. Nov. 7 at 8:30.)

G3
An air guitarist's dream, this tour culls together renowned gunslingers Joe Satriani, Steve Vai, and Yngwie Malmsteen, a hirsute Swedish virtuoso with a thing for Beethoven. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-307-7171. Nov. 10-11 at 7:30.)

BELLE & SEBASTIAN
This Glasgwegian ensemble, led by Stuart Murdoch, has built its reputation on sad, literate indie-pop songs. With its sixth and latest album, "Dear Catastrophe Waitress," the group remains deep in the library stacks, but the sound is brighter and somehow lighter. Murdoch is an avowed Mets fan (the album includes the song "Piazza, New York Catcher," and the group held a mid-game press conference at Shea Stadium earlier this year); perhaps he's found a new outlet for his sadness. (Town Hall. Nov. 10-11 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

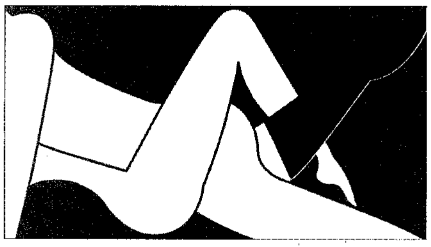
BITTER END
147 Bleecker St. (212-673-7030)—Nov 6: A couple from Charlottesville, Virginia, **Paul Curreri** and **Devon Sproule** each play their own delicately muscled folk blues; together, the pair wrestle gorgeously through sweet, cutting harmonies.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Nov. 8: Specializing in an unlikely composite of high-powered garage rock and unfettered soul, the **Dirtbombs** are a Detroit combo with a frenetic rhythm section made up of two drummers and two bass players. Nov. 10: Originally the offspring of Britain's so-called "shoegazer" community of indie bands in the early nineties, the whisper-quiet dream-pop trio **Mojave 3** started its career under the name Slowdive, and it sounded a little bit like My Bloody Valentine and the Cocteau Twins. Possibly realizing that the style of echoey warbling and great washes of electric guitar was well covered, the band downsized, drifted into more ambient territory, and changed its name. The trio's music is still languid and ethereal, but it now has a country-esque flair.

GALAPAGOS
70 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-782-5188)—Nov. 5: **Jonathan Coulton,** the music director for the wry "Little Gray Book" lecture series, performs songs from his début CD, "Smoking Monkey," a collection of often humorous power-pop odes to disposable furniture ("IKEA"), social climbing ("Millionaire Girlfriend"), and outdoor fornication ("First of May"). (See also Above and Beyond.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Paging Through the Demimonde



A cheerful sign photographed on the wall of a house in Nevada in 1987 reads, "SMILE: It's the 2nd Best Thing You Can Do with Your Lips." The risqué wall hanging is the only hint that the room in the photograph is the otherwise genteel parlor of a brothel called the Shamrock, in the desert town of Lathrop Wells. The picture is one of more than a hundred and fifty views of largely unpopulated rooms in **BROTHELS OF NEVADA** (Princeton Architectural Press), a collection of work by the architectural photographer Timothy Hursley, who documents America's legal sex trade and also American vernacular style, from oversize trailer homes painted bubble-gum pink to shag-carpeted bedrooms where blow-up dolls peek out from closets panelled in faux wood.

A strong sense of place is absent from **LAPDANCER** (PowerHouse Books), a collection of snapshots by Juliana Beasley, who started stripping in 1992 to support her photography career. The two worlds converged, and Beasley ended up taking thousands of photographs of the "gentleman's club" circuit. A selection of those images, along with interviews with strippers and Beasley's own text—which manages to be both gimlet-eyed and self-absorbed—offer as much backstage access as most readers would ever want. In some cases, the lens is only inches away from a dancer's bare breast or the muzzy face of a drunk patron. Over the course of the book, the nudity loses most of its charge. What remains is a sense of pathetic obsession that is typified by the letter reproduced on the back cover: "Dear Brandy, Such is your power of intoxication that I have spent two restless nights now remembering your performances as 'foxy lady.' "

—*Mark Rozzo*

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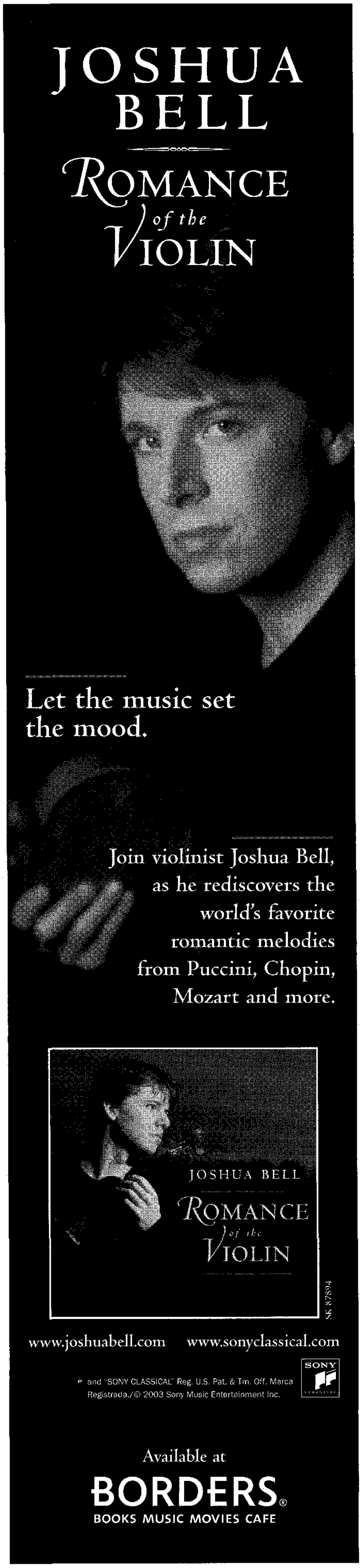
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IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Nov. 9: Initially infiltrating MTV by apparent subterfuge (mocking the clichés and excesses of pop videos in their own clip for "All the Small Things"), the giddily puerile pop-punk upstarts in **Blink 182** unwittingly one-upped their elders in Green Day. They've become massively popular with the mainstream audience, a demographic formerly considered untouchable by punk-rock purists.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 5-6: The veteran country singer **Shelby Lynne** (see also Pop Notes). Nov. 7-8: The Brazilian vocalist **Virginia Rodriguez.**

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Nov. 7: **The Band of Blacky Ranchette,** an alt-country supergroup belonging to Howe Gelb, of Giant Sand. With **Kristin Hersh** and **Andrew Bird.**

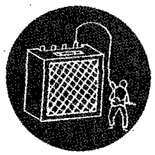
MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—Nov. 8: **British Sea Power,** a young group from Brighton with a taste for angular, literate rock, loves going wild—it often performs on stages outfitted with stuffed birds and bits of foliage. Nov. 9: The **Dirtbombs** (see the Bowery Ballroom).

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—Nov. 5: Filtering classic rockabilly guitar riffs through a frenzy of punk clamor, the incendiary Japanese trio **Guitar Wolf** dispels all rumors that rock and roll as an exciting musical force is dead. Nov. 8: **Badly Drawn Boy** is Damon Gough, an erratic if inspiring English singer-songwriter. With the torch songs of **Leona Naess.**

SIN-É
150 Attorney St. (212-388-0077)—Nov. 6: Secret Crush Records, a new local label, celebrates the release of "Stamp Collecting (For Beginners)," its utterly charming new compilation of sparkling indie-pop gems, with two of its New York City bands, the **Alps** and the **Baskervilles.** Nov. 8: Britain's outspoken **New Model Army** is a long-running and prolific punk band known for a stridently working-class ethic. N.M.A.'s lead singer and principal songwriter, Justin Sullivan (who formerly used the fearsome moniker Slade the Leveller), and the guitarist Dean White are undertaking their first American tour in ten years as an acoustic duo.

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-0505)—Nov. 7: The **Polyphonic Spree,** a twenty-plus-member outfit from Austin, Texas, with a penchant for relentlessly positive harmonizing and long white robes. Nov. 8: The cheerily demented depressive Mark Oliver Everett and his band the **Eels.**

POP NOTES



DISTAFF MEETINGS
In 2000, after years in the country-music wilderness, Shelby Lynne won a Best New Artist Grammy for what was in fact her sixth solo album, "I Am Shelby Lynne." There wasn't a more calculated record released that year—it seemed designed specifically to vault Lynne into the commercial and critical orbit of artists such as Sheryl Crow—but it deserved the award. Although her next effort, the arid "Love, Shelby," faltered, **"Identity Crisis"** (Capitol), Lynne's new album, returns her to previous heights. Opening with the beautifully sung, subtly bitter "Telephone," it contains a dozen original compositions that range from country ballads ("Lonesome," which sounds like a lost Patsy Cline gem) to gospel-tinged rave-ups ("10 Rocks") and tough rock numbers ("Gotta Be Better"). The songs are short and sharp, and Lynne's vocals, pushed way out in front of the mix, are immaculate.

On paper, Mandy Moore's **"Coverage"** (Epic) must have seemed like an ingenious idea: take one of the more substantial of the recent crop of teen-pop sirens and pair her with battle-tested specimens of seventies and eighties songcraft, including Cat Stevens's "Moonshadow," Joni Mitchell's "Help Me," and Carly Simon's "Anticipation" (which Moore, who was born in 1984, claims to know from the album rather than from the famous mid-seventies Heinz ketchup commercial). The songs, in theory, would reach a new generation of listeners, and Moore would soak up the credibility of the original recordings. "Coverage" works, to some degree. Moore turns in a surprisingly credible performance of "Help Me"; there's a callow but angelic optimism in the lead single, a version of John Hiatt's "Have a Little Faith in Me"; and her version of Todd Rundgren's "Can We Still Be Friends" manages to retain the chipper melancholy of the original. But the peaks are surrounded, if not by valleys, by flats; Blondie's "One Way or Another" can't flow seamlessly into Joe Jackson's "Breaking Us in Two" unless both songs lose most of their meaning. Interpretive singers are supposed to put their own stamp on lyrics and melodies. Moore does that, perhaps too well; the distinguishing feature of the record is its innocuousness.

—Ben Greenman

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through Dec. 31, **Bobby Short.**

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Nov. 4-5: **Tisziji Muñoz,** a guitarist with a mystical bent, a reputation for sonic explorations, and a cult following among six-string aficionados. His New York band includes the saxophonist **Ravi Coltrane** and the "Late Show" band leader, **Paul Shaffer.** Nov. 6-9: Best known for his longtime associations with British prog-rock bands like Yes and King Crimson, Bill Bruford has always been a closet jazzman. His **Earthworks** unit finds the technically accomplished drummer in settings that may come as a surprise to anyone familiar with, say, "Siberian Khatru," from the 1972 Yes album, "Close to the Edge." Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

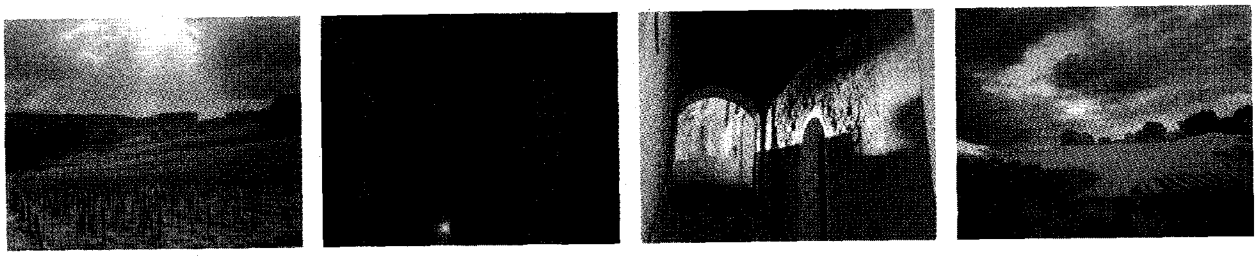
JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Nov. 7: The **Michael Weiss** septet. His ambitious new album, "Soul Journey," keeps Weiss's shrewd writing and arranging skills as clearly in view as his sleek piano work, honed with the likes of Art Farmer and Johnny Griffin.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Nov. 4-5: The **Moutin Reunion Quartet.** New York may be more familiar with the dexterous bassist François, who now calls our city home, than with his identical twin brother, Louis, a drummer based in Paris. Nov. 6: The **Don Friedman** trio. As his new album, "Waltz for Debbie," proves, this perennially underrated pianist who's been active since the sixties is still making satisfying mainstream modernist recordings. He's here with the blue-chip rhythm team of the bassist **Buster Williams** and the drummer **Billy Drummond.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—**Judy Kuhn** (here Mondays in November) is a Broadway mainstay whose show "Finding Home" astutely sets songs by Tom Waits, Joni Mitchell, and Adam Guettel against material by the likes of Harold Arlen and Kurt Weill.

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200, ext. 107)—Nov. 6: So in control of an audience that

Joel Meyerowitz, master of *Cape Light*, illuminates the soul of Italy.



There are countless books celebrating the magic of Tuscany, but none illuminates its soul more beautifully than this stunning and lyrical volume of photographs by the acclaimed photographer Joel Meyerowitz, with an evocative text by novelist Maggie Barrett.

Meyerowitz's breathtaking color plates conjure with bewitching grace the delicacy and enduring strength of the light that inspirits the fabled Tuscan countryside. His gallery of images—encompassing vineyards and olive groves, meadows and farmlands, venerable villas and lanes lined with cypress trees—transports us to a place of timeless beauty both natural and cultivated. Barrett's prose interludes put into words the wonder our eyes behold as we watch the subtle ways in which the light of Tuscany enacts an endless enchantment.

Exquisitely photographed, beautifully written, and lavishly produced, *Tuscany: Inside the Light* offers an intimate portrait of an unforgettable place. It's a matchless gift for lovers of Italy and for lovers of fine photography, at an incredible price. Published by Barnes & Noble Books.

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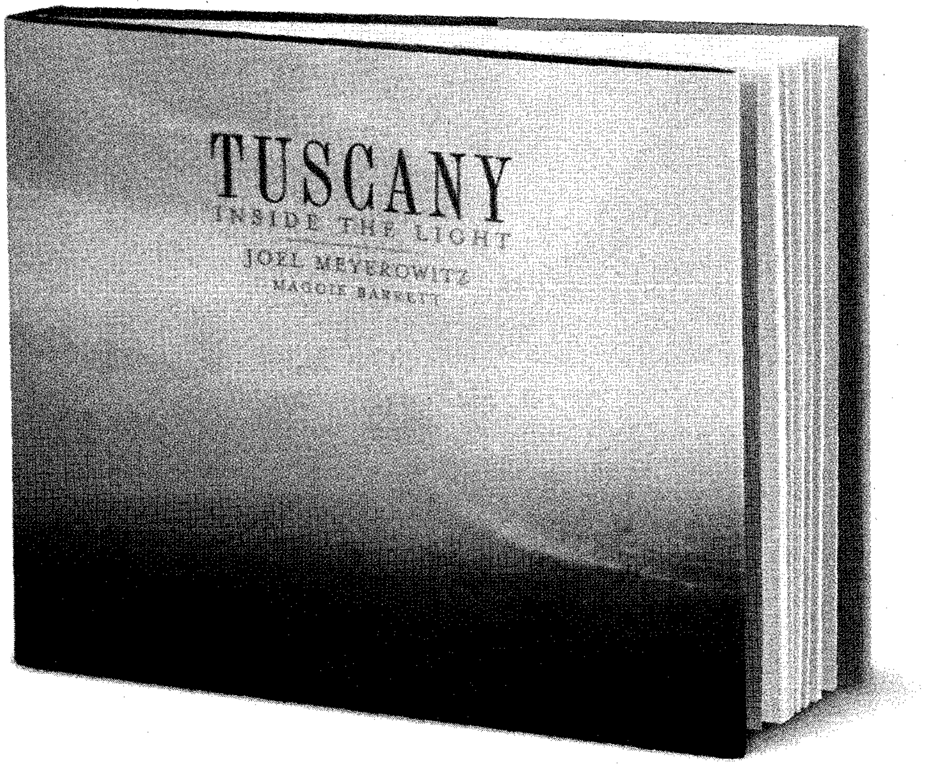

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resistance to her icy charms is next to impossible, the sexy singer **Ute Lemper** displays a level of vocal strength and interpretive imagination that just isn't found in the vast majority of cabaret artists.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Nov. 7-8: The **Hamiet Bluiett** quartet. The fact that Bluiett plays the bottom-end baritone saxophone has never stopped him from extracting high-altitude notes that even a soprano saxophone might have trouble reaching. A mainstay of the World Saxophone Quartet, this edgy improviser roots his explorations and subterranean-to-stratospheric tonal digressions in the bedrock of blues and gospel.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Nov. 9: The **Tom Harrell** quintet. "Wise Children," Harrell's latest release, features a bevy of top vocalists interpreting his original tunes, but the trumpeter leaves the stars at home for this run with his practiced quintet featuring the simpatico tenor saxophonist **Jimmy Greene.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—The tremendous El Greco retrospective celebrates art history's No. 1 troublemaker, the Cretan icon painter who got sophisticated in Venice and Rome and then, settling in Toledo in 1576, hit his stride as a pictorial mystic and rhapsode of the Counter-Reformation. His absolute originality—or weirdness, if you prefer—inspired Picasso and Pollock and still feels rawly new. The show emphasizes El Greco's more conventional, first-rate portraiture, but his vertiginous incarnations of ecclesiastical dogma are the main event. Their pictorial method (ascending figures elongate like blobs in a Lava lamp) suggests upside-down gravity. Through Jan. 11. ♦ A retrospective of the works of Philip Guston. Through Jan. 4. ♦ When the French diorama artist Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre invented a way to make one-of-a-kind photographs on silver-plated copper, the rage for daguerreotypes became so intense that five and a half tons of silver were used by Parisian platemakers in a single year. (The mania ended with the invention of photographic paper, in the mid-eighteen-fifties.) **"The Dawn of Photography: French Daguerreotypes, 1839-1855,"** an exhaustive and, at times, exhausting show, features a hundred and seventy-five works, from still-lifes to street scenes to portraits of well-known figures like Eugène Delacroix (looking maniacal) and Victor Hugo (looking crabby). Near the end of the show, a selection of female nudes is followed by a dog, a bull, a horse, and a prosthetic limb, as if to say that all subjects are equal before the camera's neutral gaze. Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Dreams of Yellow Mountain: Landscapes of Survival in Seventeenth-Century China."** Through Jan. 25. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

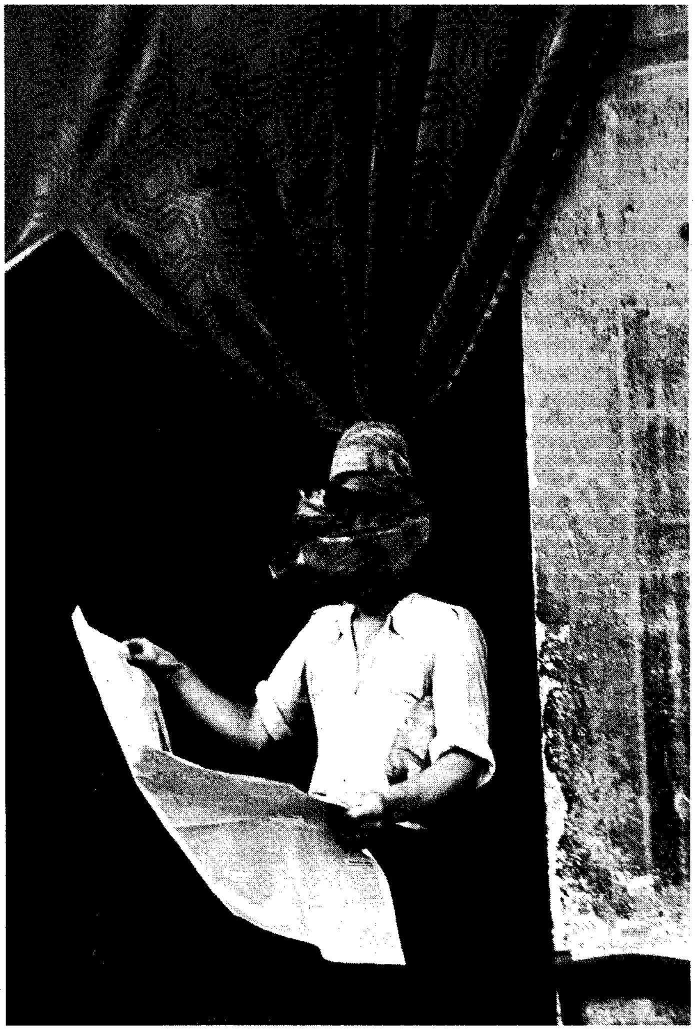
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—Liam Gillick's wall painted with intertwining bands of ochre, brown, and orange transforms the museum's entrance into a cross between a Scandinavian design center and a corporate lobby. The image suggests a magnified diagram of fibre-optic cable, which is fitting, since the project was originally conceived for a Norwegian telecommunications company. Near the ticket counter, a painted aluminum cube is suspended from the ceiling, lined with text from B. F. Skinner's "Walden Two." If the connection between the two works seems tangential, that's the point: distraction and diversion are central to Gillick's project, which sneaks his complex and subversive theories of post-utopian social space (you can find his articulate explanation of this in a museum brochure) into objects that have the polish and appeal of mass-produced design. Through Dec. 1. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"James Rosenquist"** is a pinball machine of a retrospective, gracing the museum's ramp with two-dimensional equivalents of rackety lights and bumpers. The early Pop work, which uses billboard-painting technique to create surrealistic montages of slightly outdated magazine imagery, feels immortal. It nails a recurrent effect of modernity: the rolling blind spot of the recent past. Bigger, slicker later paintings succumb to mere razzmatazz. But Rosenquist earns blanket forgiveness on the strength of his classic "F-111" (1964-65), a multi-panelled wraparound work, eighty-six feet long, that distills the madnesses of the nineteen-sixties with supple, violent majesty. Some people deem it the Great American Painting. Others have yet to look at it sufficiently. Through Jan. 25. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—At the end of Lothar Baumgarten's film **"The Origin of the Night,"** which seems to present ninety-eight minutes of the jungle in semi-darkness, a legend (in German) appears on the screen: "Shot in the forests of the Rhine, 1973-77." It isn't a surprise, exactly. The trancelike piece is filled with rippling waters, heavy green vines, and mighty trees, with a soundtrack of ambient chirps and croaks. But viewers also see rubber tires and discarded scraps of plastic interrupting the apparent rain-forest lushness; at one point airplanes go overhead. Baumgarten composed a faux Amazon in his own polluted back yard, turning an abjectly familiar vista exotic. Through Nov. 30. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

ASIA SOCIETY
725 Park Ave., at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Tooba,"** a sanctimonious installation by Shirin Neshat, shot in color and inspired by the legend of the sacred tree of happiness in the Koran, lacks the ravishing intensity of her earlier black-and-white videos, which explored the complex tensions between women and men and between culture and repression in contemporary Islam. It opens beautifully: wrinkles on an old woman's face contrast with furrows in rugged terrain. Then the camera pulls back to reveal the woman hidden in the hollows of a massive tree, as hordes of men and women advance toward it through the landscape. The apparent menace shifts as the crowd approaches, then comes to a slack-jawed standstill more like stupor than awe. Through Feb. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Black Belt"** seems to have been inspired by the confrontation in the 1978 kung-fu film "Game of Death" between the lithe and lethal but physically small Bruce Lee and his towering, bearded opponent, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, with sunglasses and Afro. Twenty-two artists draw a variety of lessons from the epochal encounter in this homage to chop-socky flicks, blaxploitation soundtracks, and funky outfits. Standouts include Louis Gispert's walk-in stereo speaker, short animated films by Ellen Gallagher and Edgar Cleijne, and Rico Gatson's multiscreen homage linking such heroes as Lee and Jabbar to Martin Luther King, Jr., and Public Enemy. Through Jan. 4. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)


"Livorno, Italy," from 1932, by Henri Cartier-Bresson, from "Faces," at Sepia International (see Photography).

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN
Early works, created when Chamberlain first realized that auto wreckage could be as lyrical as paint. A few smaller works actually have frames, and compared to later, larger pieces, they come off like witty plein-air sketches. Through Dec. 20. (Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 212-987-4997.)

JANET MALCOLM
Bookstein, 50 E. 78th St. 212-439-9605.
Through Nov. 26.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

MARK BRADFORD
What looks like painting in the high abstract tradition is in fact made with collaged chunks of billboard advertisements and singed squares of the translucent paper used for giving permanents. Bradford owns a hair salon in Los Angeles, and his imbrication of urban detritus into the serene color fields of modernism has become a signature style—a dirtying up and physicalizing that Rothko et al. would never have imagined nor countenanced. All to the good, but one wonders where Bradford, who is in danger of having a single idea (mixing cosmetology with Ab Ex) turn into a pat device, can go from here. Through Nov. 15. (Lombard Freid, 531 W. 26th St. 212-967-8040.)

JASON DODGE
Dodge has created an installation enigmatically concerned (we are told) with International Style buildings and public spaces and night clubs where junkies go. What this means is minimalist scatter, elegantly designed: freestanding metal sculptures like waiting-room ashtrays, stainless-steel rods connecting the floor to the ceiling, giant images of a hypodermic needle, a blindingly bright lamp made with sunglasses and other reflective objects, some plastic bags printed with the visored head of a medieval knight. Through Nov. 8. (Casey Kaplan, 416 W. 14th St. 212-645-7335.)

SCOTT GRODESKY
The pleasures and terrors of family and home are exquisitely revealed in the two best paintings in this show, large-scale scenes of the artist's wife and children rendered in pencil and transparent veils of jewel-toned paint. Acrylic has rarely looked more like Renaissance egg tempera (Perugino blue has nothing on Grodesky pink). The artist has clearly been thinking about the Renaissance, because he turns around the period's big breakthrough—vanishing-point perspective—so in his works far away looks close and vice versa. The results are dreamlike. A bridge girder looms perilously close to mother and infant; the outside world threatens to invade domestic bliss. Through Nov. 8. (L.F.L., 530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700.)

JOHN PILSON
In his latest video the artist combines gothic and comic, doing for office buildings what Kubrick did for hotels, filling empty rooms and corridors with haunting—and in Pilson's case, hilarious—incidents. A woman with an accordion serenades an empty stall in the ladies' room. A diapered toddler enters an elevator unaccompanied by an adult. A cell phone is attached to a man's head with a mummy's worth of bandages. At the entrance to the show there's a tape of the building's ornate staircase, called "Alternate Ending." Pilson cleverly underscores the cinematic aspect of his work while riffing on the looped nature of video, where endings and beginnings converge. Through Nov. 8. (Klagsbrun, 526 W. 26th St. 212-243-3335.)

GORDON TERRY
"The Supernatural World in Which I Am Professionally Involved" is full of wide expanses of flat, shiny, hard plastic, each polka-dotted with a hundred miniature drip paintings, tiny colorful concentric fried eggs and bull's-eyes that seem to have been created with an eyedropper, as well as miniature galaxies aswirl with color. Three rubber-framed, partially figurative works show interiors and furniture about to be overtaken by abstract amoebae. The gallery has several single, larger paint spills that create the illusion of depth of field that would, in other circumstances, be described as trippy. Through Nov. 15. (Weiss, 520 W. 24th St. 212-691-6899.)

JESSICA STOCKHOLDER
Gorney Bravin + Lee, 534 W. 26th St.
212-352-8372. Through Nov. 15.

CHARLINE VON HEYL
Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467.
Through Nov. 8.

JOHN WESLEY
Fredericks Freiser, 504 W. 22nd St.
212-633-6555. Through Nov. 22.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

KRISTINE MARX
The spare video installations in this elegant début suggest metaphors for the creative process as solitary women (often the artist herself) pace the floor, stare into space, and walk through walls (think breakthrough). Three works use refraction or reflection to interact with the gallery's architecture. The fourth is a simple projection, the only work shot in color, which uses editing to create its perceptual tricks. In a staged domestic scene that evokes a video version of Vermeer, a woman and her double (their faces match, their outfits don't) silently share a sunlit room. Through Nov. 9. (Plane Space, 102 Charles St. 917-606-1268.)

RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA
The artist has a history of presenting his life as his art (cooking Thai food, going camping, inviting people to live in a replica of his apartment). In this winning installation, he appears to be taking a break. Nine text paintings are installed on a white cube; three conceal peepholes that reveal Tiravanija supine in a chrome-lined room watching an episode of "SpongeBob SquarePants." Is he pulling a Marina Abramovic? Nope, it's more of a Madame Tussaud, though there are sly nods to other artists, from Duchamp (the peephole)

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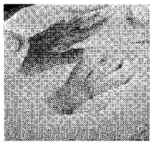

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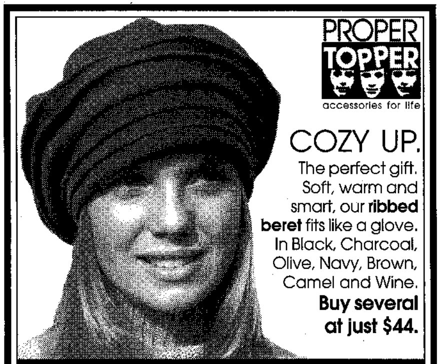

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to Paul Thek (the chrome). Through Nov. 8. (Gavin Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258.)

"AMERICAN CUTOUT"
This lively and intelligent show of cutouts and collage, organized by the British curator David Cohen, plays favorites; more than a third of the thirty-six works are by either Alex Katz or Ellsworth Kelly. Katz's freestanding portrait of Frank O'Hara is so convincing that viewers may feel they're being shadowed. On a nearby wall, a pair of Wesselman lips part for a voluptuous curl of smoke. Motherwell, de Kooning, and Krasner are on hand, as are the lesser-known Judith Rothschild and Irving Kriesberg, the latter in an Ellsworth Kelly palette of red, green, and blue. Against such strong mid-century material, the anonymous weather vane, from 1876, and the diminutive Kara Walker painting, from 1995, read more like afterthoughts than historical bookends. Through Nov. 22. (The New York Studio School, 8 W. 8th St. 212-673-6466.)

Short List

ALEX KATZ
Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.
Through Nov. 15.

RICHARD MERKIN
Wickiser, 568 Broadway. 212-941-1817.
Through Nov. 29.

PHOTOGRAPHY

"FACES"
This show of more than fifty photographers, with images drawn from the last hundred years, bulges at its seams. Racing through the exhibit can be dizzying—with selections from the documentarian Lewis Hine, the classically modernist Manuel Alvarez Bravo, the jazzy Henri Cartier-Bresson and William Klein, and the psychologically intrepid Diane Arbus, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, and Francesca Woodman. Through Nov. 22. (Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 212-645-9444.)

ADAM FUSS
This thoughtful show includes a roomful of small black-and-white and color photographs of Fuss, from infancy to age eleven, mounted on the sort of enamel plaques that are used on Russian gravestones. They announce the theme of metamorphosis, which culminates in another room in the gallery, with blown-up images of butterfly chrysalides. In between is a haunting series of daguerreotypes of human skulls, the surfaces of which are mesmerizing. Each silvery surface is so reflective that while viewing the memento mori you gaze at your own face. Through Nov. 15. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

TOM HUNTER
The title of this British artist's show—"Life and Death in Hackney"—has a documentary ring, but, in fact, the images have more in common with Rossetti than with Riis. Hunter's tableaux vivants, set in a hardscrabble East London neighborhood, are often fantastically vibrant, like fairy-tale illustrations. But tough working-class women await rescue in weedy, mean fields rather than in castles, and, in the show's loveliest image, they prepare to emerge, naiad-like, from a pond choked with rotting lily pads. Through Nov. 29. (Yancey Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

BILL JACOBSON
Like many photographers, Jacobson makes gently blurred images, but his are particularly unselfconscious and confident. Although his streetscapes have a sad familiarity, the portraits, with their blunted humanoid figures floating in depthless black, are more elusive. In one, a man sits on a couch in a space awash in a shade of blue, his hands and shins rendered as planes of livid pink. Through Nov. 29. (Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)

MICHAEL MARTONE
These virtuosic pictures, all from the nineteen-sixties and seventies, evoke dreams, myths, and nightmares through the simplest subjects. The south wall of pictures is like a haiku—a nude seen from behind, a violin case propped against a wall, a stair-

case with a large mirror, a plastic couple from a wedding cake. Through Nov. 22. (Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-4819.)

Short List

MIRANDA LICHTENSTEIN
Dee, 545 W. 20th St. 212-924-7545. Through Nov. 8.
SALLY MANN
Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070. Through Nov. 15.
MARY ELLEN MARK
Kennedy Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9889. Through Nov. 8.
WILLIAM HENRY FOX TALBOT
Kraus, at the Mark Hotel, 25 E. 77th St. 212-794-2064. Through Nov. 21.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

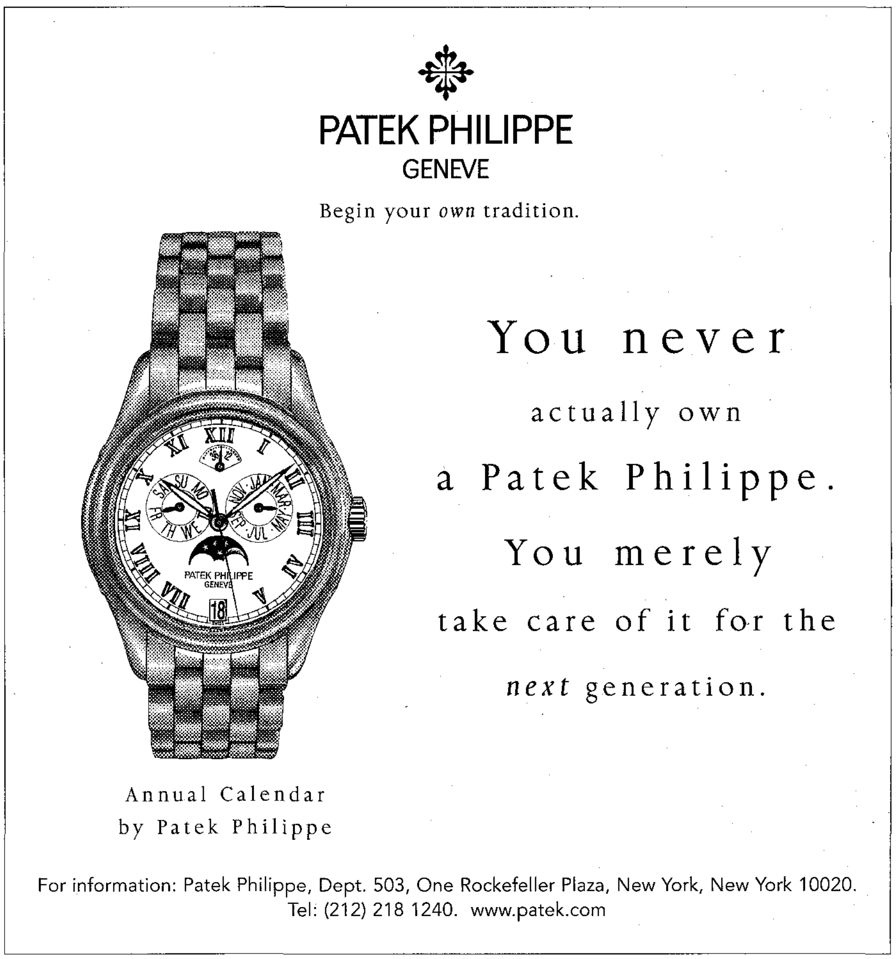
SOTHEBY'S
Nov. 5 at 7 and Nov. 6 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Gustav Klimt, a notorious sensualist, seems to have regarded the Austrian landscape as he did the female body: the dazzling lushness of "Landhaus am Attersee" (expected to bring up to twenty-five million dollars) recalls the painter's luxuriant nudes. The auction, however, belongs to Picasso, whose work constitutes a fifth of the evening sale. From the intimations of mortality in "Personnage à la Pipe" to the audacious defiance of death in "Nus

TABLES FOR TWO

SAMPLE
152 Smith St., Brooklyn (718-643-6622)—In Spanish, *en conserva* means preserved or canned, as in *pescado en conserva* (canned fish). *Conserva* can also mean the stuff in the can, and at Sample, a new *conserva* bar in Boerum Hill opened by Josh Cohen and Maio Martinez—who also operate the Carolina-style barbecue joint Biscuit, in Prospect Heights—that's what you get. Everything on the menu (except, mercifully, the cheese) is canned or cured or in some way preserved so as not to require refrigeration or preparation. In other words, the food is opened, not cooked. This anti-greenmarket approach may not sound promising: you'd think that the foodies had lost their minds. But, in fact, the pantry of the world is full of strange and marvellous provisions that happen to come in tins, jars, or cans, and Cohen and Martinez have set out to raid it.

The modest storefront space has a colonial air—mosquito screens, ceiling fans shadowing the room—and is decorated with forty-year-old maps of the continents (the classroom kind that unscroll like window shades). Each item on the menu is listed with its country of origin, so you can find it on the maps as you regard it, with some hesitation, on your plate. From Japan come broiled mackerel, seasoned sardines, and smoked *hamachi;* from Turkey, pepper dolma (green peppers stuffed with rice and spices); from Lebanon, cheese pie; from New Zealand, big smoked mussels, alongside a sweet tomato compote that takes the edge off the smoke; and from Spain, *piquillo* peppers, *jamón serrano*, and cured bluefin-tuna belly, in addition to a selection of nifty cheeses (*Garrotxa*, *zamorano*) that come with a fig or quince paste. Everything is served tapas style, on little dishes. The grilled *borretane* onions from Italy, oily and sweet, don't seem to suffer much from having spent several seasons in a jar, but the same can't be said for the marinated octopus (also Italian); it's so rubbery and bland that you might as well just eat the maps. (Open for dinner daily. Dishes $2-$6.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*



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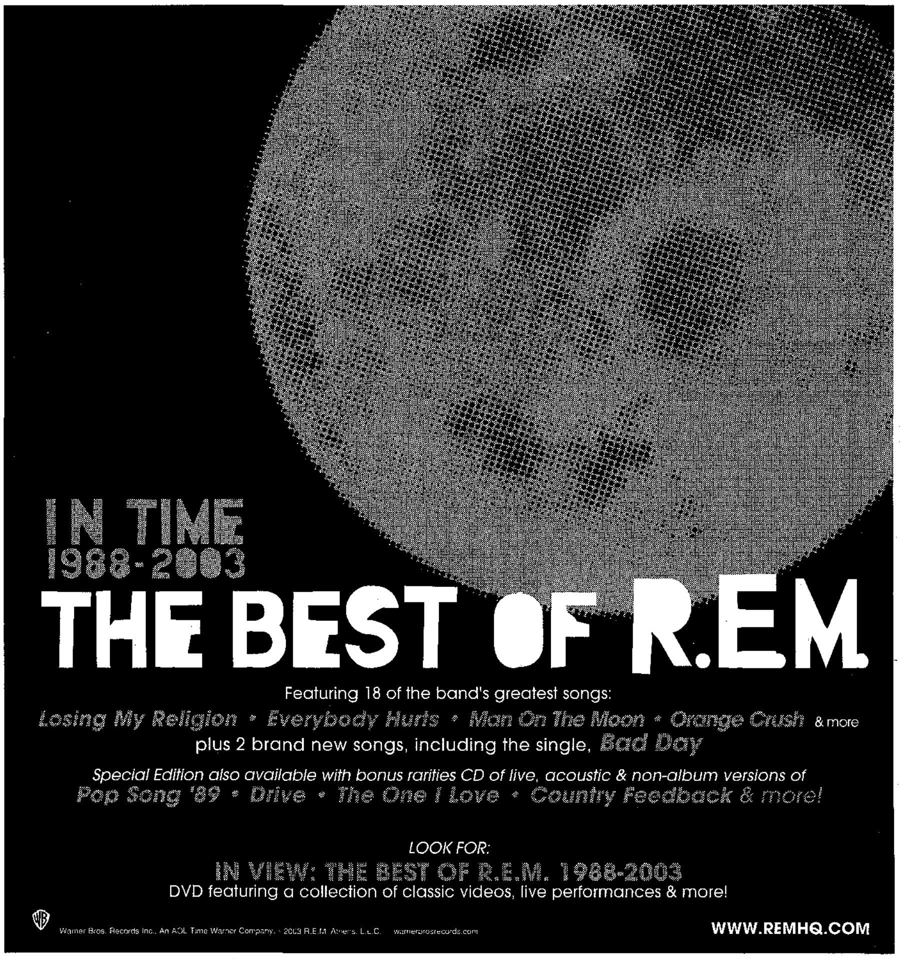

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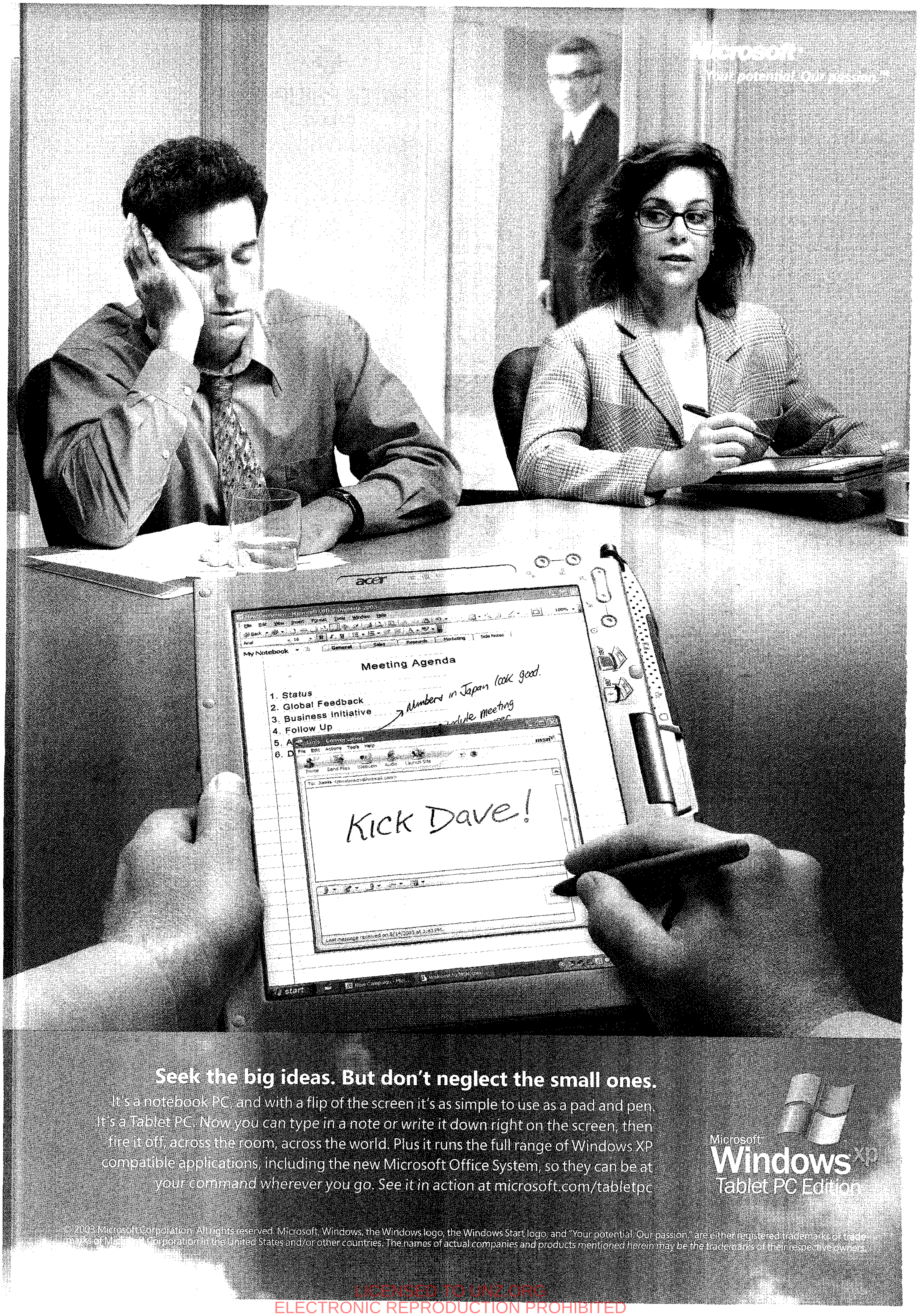
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Masculins" (painted two years after the Germans had entered Paris), the works included here bristle with a raw, primal energy. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S

In 1942, the pioneering curator Dorothy C. Miller began her thirty-five-year career at the Museum of Modern Art, where, in her "Americans" shows, she introduced the likes of Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Isamu Noguchi, Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauschenberg to an eager public. The evening sale of postwar and contemporary art, on Nov. 11 at 7 (admission by ticket only), features ten works from Miller's collection, including Jasper Johns's "Gray Numbers" (1957), painted, unlike the later "Numbers" paintings, without the aid of stencils. ♦ Nov. 12 at 10 A.M.: More works from the Miller collection. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

DOYLE

Nov. 11 at 10 A.M.: Books and autographs. ♦ Nov. 11 at 1: Old Master, modern, and contemporary prints. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

SWANN

Nov. 6 at 10:30 A.M.: Rembrandt's etching "The Three Trees" (expected to bring up to ninety thousand dollars) is the highlight of an auction of Old Master prints. A general auction of prints follows at 1:30. ♦ Nov. 10 at 10:30 A.M.: A selection of travel posters. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

POSTER AUCTIONS INTERNATIONAL

Nov. 9 at 10:30 A.M.: The International Poster Center celebrates the centenary of Orville Wright's first powered flight with "The Wright Stuff," an auction of pre-nineteen-twenties posters, prints, drawings, photographs, and objects illustrating the early days of flight. ♦ Nov. 9 at 12: "Poster Holiday," an auction of vintage travel and holiday posters. (601 W. 26th St. 212-787-4000.)

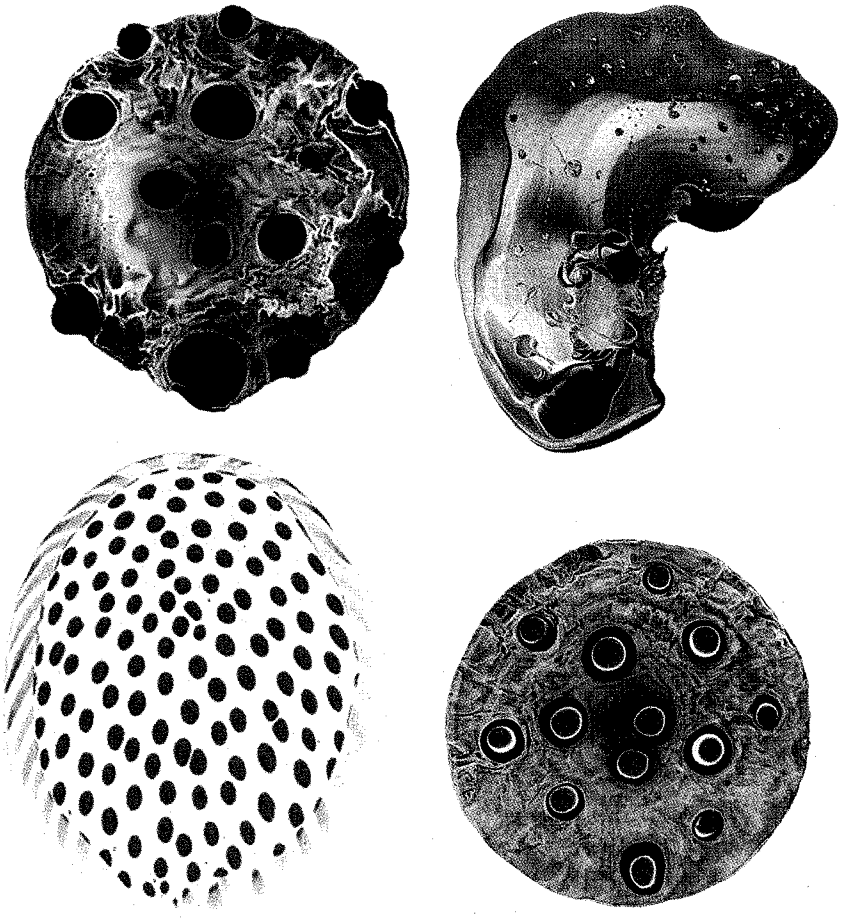
CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

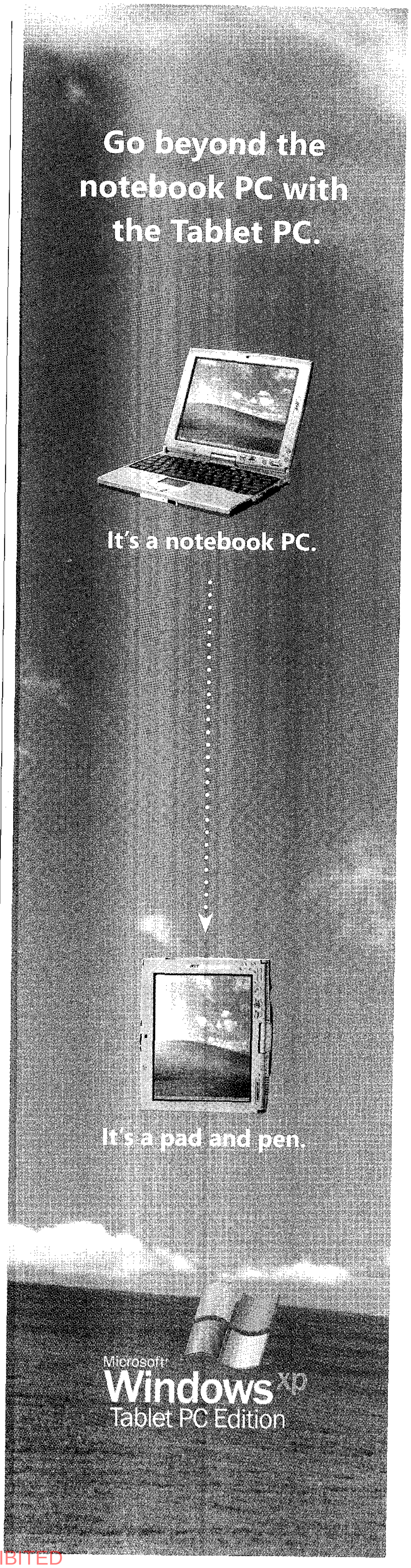
The Met has front-loaded most of the season's novelties into its fall schedule, perhaps none more tantalizing than the return of Halévy's **"La Juive,"** a majestically lyrical (if shamelessly sensational) melodrama in the mold of "Il Trovatore." Once a staple of the Romantic repertory (Mahler adored it), the work became operatic poison in the wake of the Holocaust. The Met's first performance of the work since the 1935-36 season is a striking production from the Vienna State Opera. Its stars are a study in contrast: the aristocratically elegant Soile Isokoski in the title role and the stentorian Neil Shicoff as her father, Eléazar. Elizabeth Futral, Eric Cutler, and Ferruccio Furlanetto are also featured; Marcello Viotti conducts. (Nov. 6 at 7:30 and Nov. 10 at 8.) ♦ A special nonsubscription performance of **"La Bohème,"** with Elena Evseeva, Zvetelina Vassileva, Aquiles Machado (as Rodolfo, in his début), and Richard Zeller; Daniel Oren. (Nov. 7 at 8.) ♦ Ruth Ann Swenson takes the title role in **"La Traviata,"** which also features Rolando Villazon (a wonderful new Alfredo) and Bruno Caproni; Paul Nadler. (Nov. 8 at 1:30 and Nov. 11 at 8.) ♦ **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** with Susanne Mentzer, Antonio Siragusa, Russell Braun, and John Del Carlo; Bruno Campanella. (Nov. 8 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

"Carmen," with Jessie Raven, Melanie Vaccari, David Corman, and Michael Chioldi; Gary Thor Wedow conducts. (Nov. 5 at 7:30 and Nov. 9 at 1:30.) ♦ **"The Mikado,"** featuring Anna Christy, Myrna Paris, Keith Jameson, Richard Suart, and Jan



Four separate details from Gordon Terry's drip painting "Depleted Aristocrats, Marginal Poets, Unhealthy Socialites, and Other Deviants," at Weiss.



Opalach; Gerald Steichen. (Nov. 6 at 7:30 and Nov. 8 at 1:30.) ♦ **"The Magic Flute"** (sung in English), featuring Julianne Borg, Cheryl Evans, Don Frazure, David Adam Moore, and Bert K. Johnson; Neal Goren. (Nov. 7 at 8.) ♦ Notable for its shrewd employment of simple, diaphanous curtains and attractive, variegated costumes, City Opera's longtime production of **"Turandot"** manages to provide abundant spectacle without a lot of expensive clutter to upstage its excellent cast. This welcome return features Lori Phillips (a young powerhouse soprano, as Turandot), Oksana Krovytska, Philip Webb, and Seth Malkin in the leading roles; George Manahan. (Nov. 8 at 8.) ♦ The season première of **"Don Pasquale,"** a traditional production featuring Angela Turner Wilson, Bruce Sledge, Michael Chioldi, and Peter Strummer (in the title role); Manahan. (Nov. 11 at 7:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)

"FROM THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD"
Leon Botstein, bringing his Bard Music Festival downstate for a day, conducts the American Symphony Orchestra in a concert performance of Janáček's opera (after Dostoyevsky's novel), featuring the singers Andrew Nolen, Inna Dukach, Peter Kazaras, and Wendy Hill, among others. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 8 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel concludes his three-week festival of Beethoven's symphonies and piano concertos. The remarkable young American pianist Jonathan Biss is the guest artist for a program featuring the "Leonore" Overture No. 2, the Symphony No. 7, and the Piano Concerto No. 5 ("Emperor"). (Nov. 4 and Nov. 6 at 7:30.) ♦ The Ninth Symphony, with the singers Christine Brewer, Nancy Maultsby, Michael Schade, and Ferruccio Furlanetto, along with the Westminster Symphonic Choir; the puckish, neoclassical Eighth Symphony begins the concert. (Nov. 7-8 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

ESTONIAN PHILHARMONIC CHAMBER CHOIR
Paul Hillier's luminous and powerful ensemble—whose devotion and expertise have engendered a glorious revival of Baltic choral composition—turns to the East for a concert of Russian Orthodox church music from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (along with several contemporary works), presented by Chris Williamson's supercool "Rock Hotel" series. The Angel Orensanz Center, a nineteenth-century former synagogue with a hauntingly archaic interior, should be an ideal venue. (172 Norfolk St. 212-529-7914. Nov. 5 at 8.)

"SACRED MUSIC"
A little chamber choir, hand-picked by the conductor-impresario George Steel, teams up with the So Percussion ensemble and other new-music all-stars for a program that only Steel could devise—works by Zorn (the première of "Hermeticum Sacrum"), Stravinsky, Ruggles ("Angels"), Ives, and Varèse. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Nov. 8 at 7.)

"ONLY IN AMERICA"
Gerard Schwarz conducts two concerts of music by American Jewish composers, part of a five-day series of concerts and conferences that celebrates the creativity and endurance of American Jewry over three hundred and fifty years. Nov. 8 at 8: The Chamber Sinfonia of the Manhattan School of Music performs Paul Schoenfield's "Klezmer Rondos" (with the flutist Carol Wincenc and the tenor Alberto Mizrahi) as well as highlights from Kurt Weill's "The Eternal Road" (with the Rutgers Kirkpatrick Choir), an extravagant pageant of Jewish history that briefly ran on Broadway in 1937; the vocal soloists include Elizabeth Shammash and James Maddalena. (Borden Auditorium, Broadway at 122nd St. 212-749-2802.) ♦ Nov. 10 at 8: "Ancient Inspirations, American Voices," a concert of music by Samuel Adler, Bloch, and Bernstein (the Symphony No. 3, "Kaddish," with the actress Tovah Feldshuh narrating), performed by the soprano Marina Shemesh, the Juilliard Orchestra and Choral Union, and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5030.)

MANNES ORCHESTRA
The music college, not to be left out of the Berlioz bicentennial celebrations, makes its presence known with a performance of the colossal Requiem; David Hayes conducts the orchestra, assisted by the Philadelphia Singers Chorale and the Rutgers University Glee Club. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 10 at 8.)

NEW YORK VIRTUOSI CHAMBER SYMPHONY
Kenneth Klein's ensemble plays host to the clarinettists Stanley and Naomi Drucker, guest artists in a program of Mendelssohn, Wagner, Schubert (the Symphony No. 2 in B-Flat Major), and Edward Thomas (a première). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Nov. 11 at 8.)

RECITALS

PETER SERKIN AND THE BRANDENBURG ENSEMBLE
Serkin, who brings the same lucid intensity to Bach that he does to his favorite modern scores, sits in with the ensemble (directed by the violinist Jaime Laredo) and the flutist Tara Helen O'Connor for two concerts of the composer's complete keyboard concertos. Nov. 5 at 8: The Concertos Nos. 1-2 and 7, along with the Third and Fifth Brandenburgs. ♦ Nov. 9 at 3: The Concertos Nos. 3-6 and the Concerto in A Minor for Flute, Violin, and Keyboard. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500.)

SEQUITUR: MUSIC BY LEWIS SPRATLAN
Spratlan, a veteran academic composer of quiet mien, found himself thrust into controversy when he won the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for an opera that he had composed more than twenty years before. His dramatic and vividly colored works, however, have made him a favorite on the new-music-ensemble circuit, with this intrepid New York group taking the lead. Their program includes the world première of "Zoom," for chamber orchestra, along with the New York première of "Of Time and the Seasons" (featuring the soprano Lucy Shelton). (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Nov. 6 at 8.)

LANG LANG
The Chinese megastar makes his Carnegie Hall recital début in piano works by Schumann, Haydn, Schubert (the "Wanderer" Fantasy), Tan Dun (a première), and Liszt. (212-247-7800. Nov. 7 at 8.)

AN DIE MUSIK
The affable chamber ensemble, a longtime favorite on the New York scene, offers music by Beethoven, Mozart, and Arensky (the soulful Quartet for Violin, Viola, and Two Cellos, with the cellist Edward Arron). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Nov. 9 at 4.)

SACRED MUSIC IN A SACRED SPACE
John Grew, the resident organist of Montreal's McGill University, performs the "Livre d'Orgue" by the French master Nicolas de Grigny (1672-1703) at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola. (Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-288-2520. Nov. 9 at 4.)

NEW ZEALAND STRING QUARTET
Living up to its name, the group makes its New York début playing not only works by Bartók and Beethoven but also music by the New Zealand composers John Psathas and Jack Body. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 212-288-0700. Nov. 9 at 5.)

CHRISTIANE OELZE
The soprano, prized for her lieder performances, sings songs by Schubert, Mendelssohn, Wolf, and Strauss, with the pianist Ted Taylor. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Nov. 10 at 7:30.)

THE TWELVE CELLISTS OF THE BERLIN PHILHARMONIC
This merry group, a German national treasure, draws its strength not only from its obvious virtuosity (you'd expect that) but from a versatility that lets them move seamlessly between the classical and popular spheres. Their program—a prelude to their orchestra's upcoming residency—features music by Gershwin, Glenn Miller, and, of course,

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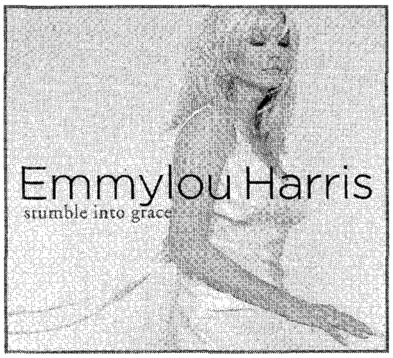

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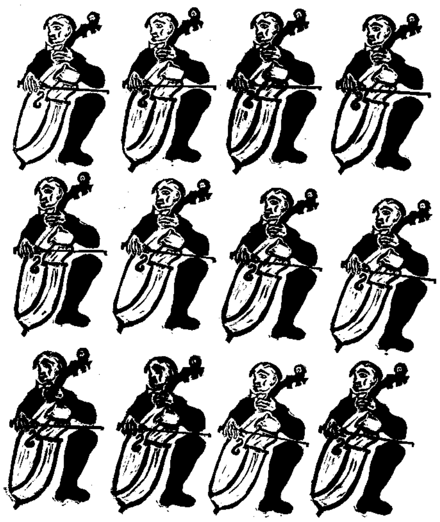
the "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5" (with the soprano Ofelia Sala). (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 11 at 7:30.)

ENSEMBLE SOSPESO

The Angel Orensanz Center is the venue for the hard-core-modernist ensemble's extravagant new program, a ten-piece set of works (by Birtwistle, Lachenmann, Ligeti, and others) along with a 9/11-themed short film by Joshua Cody and Paul Bozymowski, all set against a "choreography of light and darkness" designed by the director Jeff Sugg. (172 Norfolk St. 212-926-0759. Nov. 11 at 8.)



The irrepressible Twelve Cellists of the Berlin Philharmonic play at Zankel Hall on November 11.

HUGO GUINNESS

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

Nov. 4 at 7: *Open City* magazine presents a "Federico García Lorca happening," with the flamenco singer Enrique Morente and Galway Kinnell, Edward Hirsch, and other poets and scholars reading and discussing García Lorca's Depression-era New York City poems. (See also Night Life—Concerts.) (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 5 at 8: Salman Rushdie, Paul Auster, William Kennedy, and other writers pay tribute to Gabriel García Márquez. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. For more information, call 212-334-1660, ext. 107.) ♦ Nov. 6 at 7: Galway Kinnell, Philip Levine, James Tate, Lucille Clifton, Frank Bidart, and other Chancellors of the Academy of American Poets read from their work. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-355-6160.) ♦ Nov. 7 at 6: The Whitney's monthly "SoundCheck" evening features stories about life in New York City by Thomas Beller, Rachel Klein, Phillip Lopate, and other contributors to the literary Web site www.mrbellersneighborhood.com. (Madison Ave. at 75th St. 212-570-3676.)

TALKS

Nov. 5 at 8: The "Little Gray Book" lecture series presents the writers and comedians Sarah Vowell, Danzy Senna, Patrick Borelli, and Adam Mazmanian, holding forth on the subject of home towns, in particular Brookline, Massachusetts, the former home of the series' keen-witted host, John Hodgman. (See also Night Life—Clubs.) (Galapagos, 70 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. 718-782-5188.) ♦ Nov. 6 at 6:30: Jessica Glasscock, the author of "Striptease: From Gaslight to Spotlight," explores the history of undressing, piece by piece. (Einstein Auditorium, New York University, E. 9th St. between Second and Third Aves. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 11 at 7: The record producer Michael Cuscuna moderates a discussion about jazz criticism with the writers Dan Morgenstern and Gary Giddins and the saxophonist Greg Osby. (Kaplan Penthouse, Lincoln Center. For more information, call 212-721-6500.)

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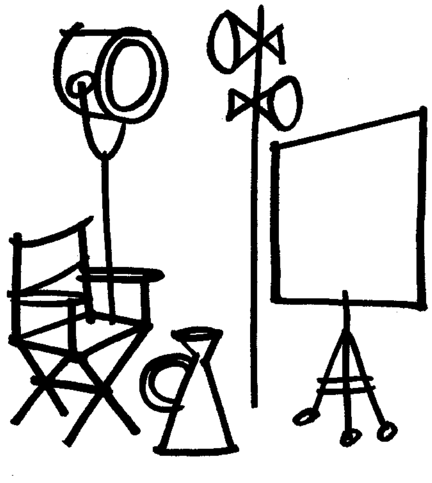

MOVIES OPENING

ELF
Will Ferrell plays a human who was raised by elves at the North Pole, in a comedy directed by Jon Favreau. With James Caan, Zooey Deschanel, Bob Newhart, Amy Sedaris, and Ed Asner. Opening Nov. 7.

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT
A documentary about a controversial U.S. Army program that trains Latin-American military officers at Fort Benning, in Georgia. Opening Nov. 7. (Anthology Film Archives.)

IN MY SKIN
Marina de Van wrote and directed this film in which she plays a woman who becomes obsessed with her body after cutting herself in a garden. In French. Opening Nov. 7. (Angelika Film Center.)

JUST AN AMERICAN BOY
A documentary about the singer-songwriter Steve Earle. Opening Nov. 7. (Cinema Village.)

LOVE ACTUALLY
A romantic comedy set in contemporary London during the Christmas season. The ensemble cast includes Hugh Grant, Keira Knightley, Laura Linney, Colin Firth, and Emma Thompson. Written and directed by Richard Curtis. Opening Nov. 7.

THE MATRIX REVOLUTIONS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 5.

THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED
Kim Bartley and Donnacha O'Briain directed this documentary about the attempted coup d'état against Hugo Chávez in Venezuela last year. Opening Nov. 5. (Film Forum.)

FILM NOTES

AMERICAN SPLENDOR
Well, it's different. Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini, directing together, have made a drama-documentary in which the drama and the documentary look at each other but don't touch. The movie is about Harvey Pekar, a real and rusted-up gentleman from Cleveland. He works as a filing clerk, and his experiences have long been the subject of a comic strip, illustrated by—among others—Robert Crumb. So we get a good dose of Harvey. But we get an even better and funnier dose of Paul Giamatti, who plays an alternative Harvey, and who is framed, or sometimes drawn, in fond imitation of a comic book—the implication being that even the cruddiest lives can, in sympathetic hands, acquire shape and grace. The story, such as it is, moves from Harvey the record collector to Harvey the cancer sufferer to Harvey the chat-show guest. There is terrific supporting work from Hope Davis as Mrs. Pekar and from Judah Friedlander as Harvey's profoundly unusual friend Toby. Mild fame may have patronized these folks, but the movie pays them a comic homage that feels flattering, fast-witted, and true.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/11/03.) (Cinema Village.)

BEYOND BORDERS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

DIRTY PRETTY THINGS
Okwe (Chiwetel Ejiofor), the African-in-exile hero of Stephen Frears's extraordinary London thriller, drives a cab during the day and works as a desk clerk in a good hotel at night; he keeps himself awake by chewing on some sort of African root. Like Travis Bickle, Robert De Niro's overstimulated psycho in "Taxi Driver," Okwe never really sleeps; unlike Bickle, Okwe is a good man, even a fanatically good man. In four or five frantic days, he tries to save another illegal immigrant, Senay (Audrey Tautou), from the clutches of the cheerfully sinister manager of the hotel in which they both work. Señor Juan (Sergi Lopez), as he's known, offers forged passports to illegals in return for a kidney or some other organ that he can sell on the black market. There are a few grisly scenes in the elegant upper rooms of the hotel, but "Dirty Pretty Things" is not a violent thriller. It might be called a social thriller—a tightly knit suspense film that reveals more of the lives of immigrants in London than the most scrupulously earnest documentaries. The great cinematographer Chris Menges keeps the images cool and crisp. There's no murk, no "atmosphere." However harried, Okwe, a great chess player, has to see every move in advance as he defends himself and his friends from the treachery on all sides.—*David Denby* (9/15/03) (Sunshine Cinema.)

Will Ferrell in "Elf," opening November 7.

STEPHEN KRONINGER

ELEPHANT
Gus Van Sant's fascinating, mysterious, semidocumentary meditation on the Columbine massacre is not very satisfying, but it's still something to see. Van Sant and his cameraman, Harris Savides, gently but persistently pad after one student and then another at a nameless school, photographing casual encounters from various points of view. The multiple versions of the same trivial event suggest the utter contingency of the disaster: one teen-ager turns in a certain direction and avoids the killers, two others do not. For Van Sant, what matters is the dailiness of school social life—gossip, flirtations, hazing—in which time and sequence count less than states of being. He punctuates the banal school scenes with beautiful shots of scudding clouds and a darkening sky, as if all of eternity were contained in a passing moment when children die.—*D.D.* (10/27/03) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

EYES WITHOUT A FACE
This famous 1959 film by Georges Franju opened in this country on double bills in a dubbed version called "The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus," but it's perhaps the most austerely elegant horror film ever made. Franju called it "a poetic fantasy," and it's a symbolist attack on the ethics of scientists. The film has a vague, floating, lyric sense of dread which goes beyond the simpler effects of horror movies that don't make intellectual claims. The story is about a surgeon (Pierre Brasseur) who, in systematic experiments, removes the faces of beautiful young kidnapped women and tries to graft them onto the ruined head of his daughter (Edith Scob). He keeps failing, the girls are destroyed, yet he persists, in a terrible parody of the scientific method. The film is both bizarrely sophisticated (with Alida Valli as the mad surgeon's mistress, doing the kidnapping in a black leather coat) and ridiculously naïve (in its plot elements). The cinematography is by the great Eugen Schüfftan; the music is by Maurice Jarre; the superb gowns are by Givenchy. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Nov. 5-11.)

THE HUMAN STAIN
Robert Benton, the maker of such muted films as "Nobody's Fool," has now turned his attention to the somewhat louder material of Philip Roth, whose infuriated tale of love in the age of Kenneth Starr was published in 2000. Anthony Hopkins is Coleman Silk, born black, but pale of skin, who, with smarting irony, is hounded from his post as a professor of classics for an allegedly racist remark. His lover, who sweeps floors and milks cows for a living, is played by Nicole Kidman, whose bearing, unfortunately for Benton, becomes more aristocratic with every passing film. The miscasting is completed by Gary Sinise, who takes the part of Nathan Zuckerman, one of Roth's roster of stand-ins. The result is calm, wintry, and plaintive—in other words, a world away from the novel. That is no crime, but Benton's decorous approach leaves the movie floundering in implausibilities. With Wentworth Miller as the younger (and more compelling) Silk.—*A.L.* (11/3/03) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 2, and Empire 25.)

IN THE CUT
A Manhattan-set art thriller of the worst kind, with harsh, high-contrast lighting, a jiggling camera, and a version of "Que Será, Será" that sounds neurotic rather than defiant. Meg Ryan is Frannie, the lonely, lost girl in the big city who is menaced by a mad killer but puts her trust in a sexy cop (Mark Ruffalo) who may or may not be the murderer. Ryan has dyed her hair light-brown in an apparent homage to the smart, masochistic character that Jane Fonda played in the 1971 thriller "Klute." She's also bravely naked in a few scenes, but she doesn't have the range and power to make us overlook what's tiresome in Frannie's character—essentially a ninny wandering through a maelstrom. Directed by Jane Campion, who worked with the

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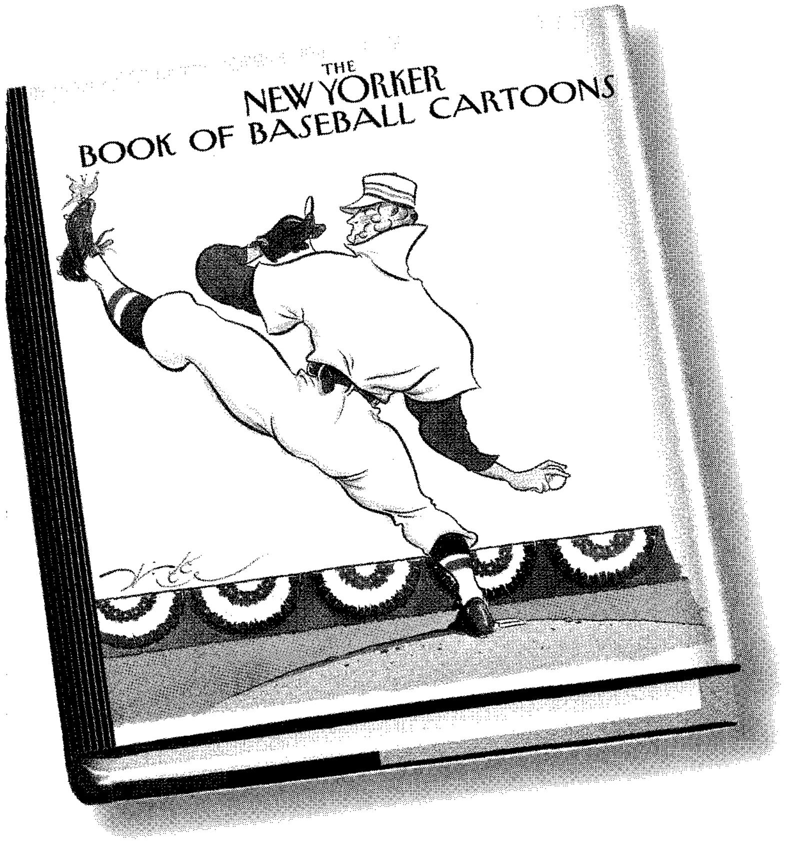
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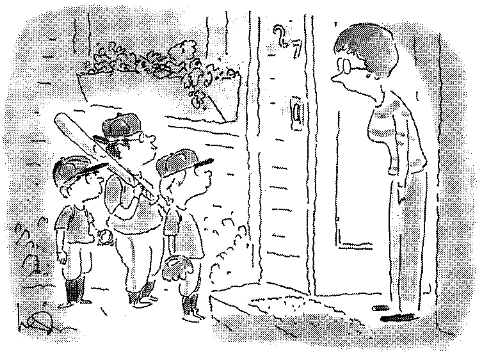

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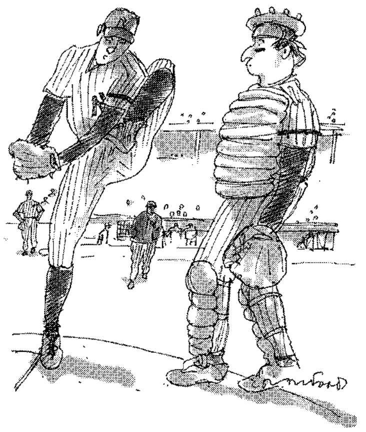

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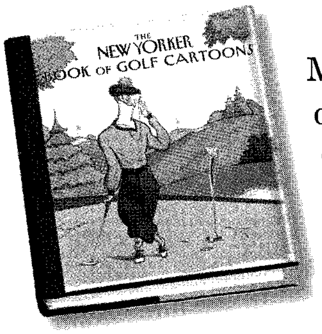
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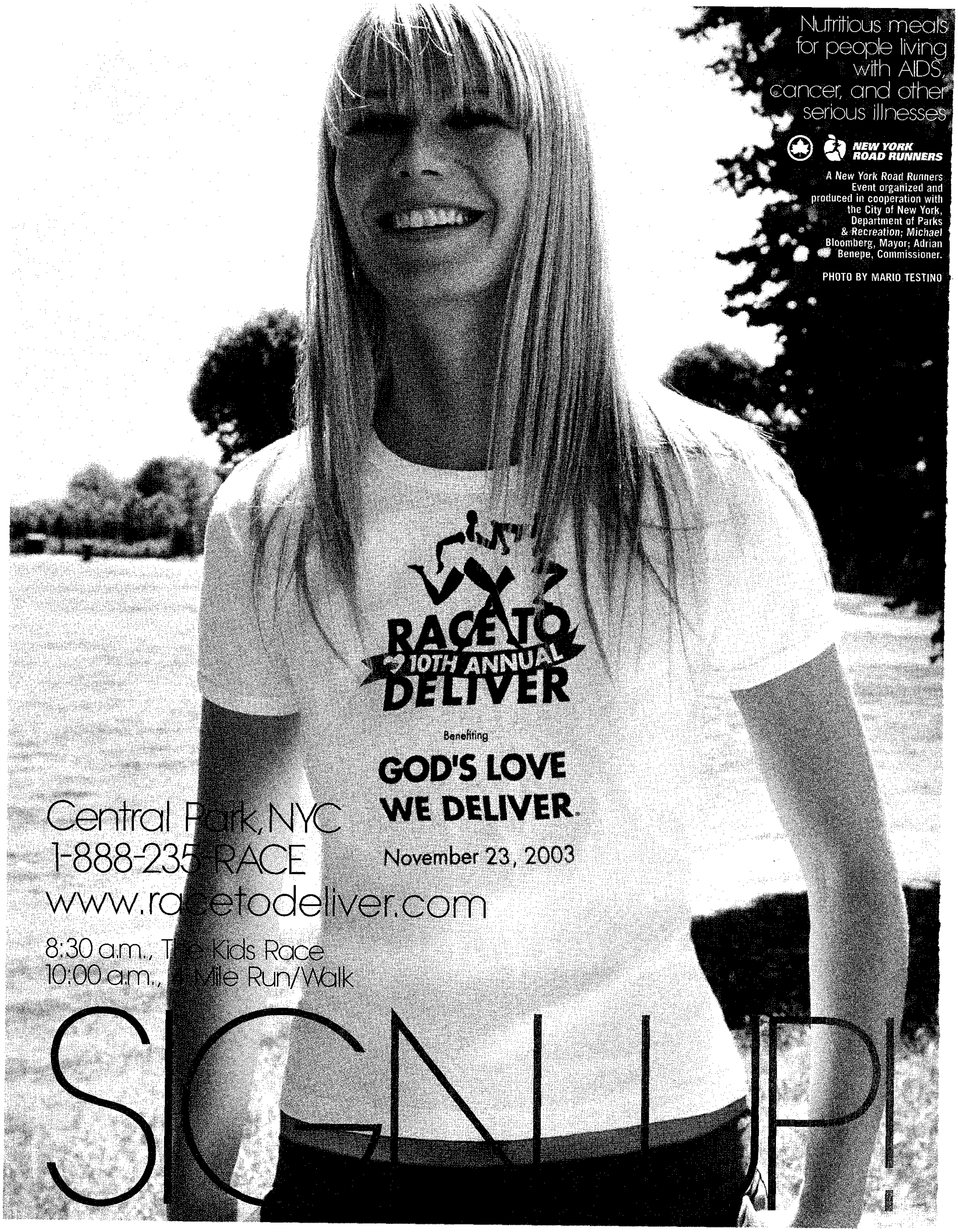

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novelist Susanna Moore on the adaptation of Moore's 1995 novel.—*D.D.* (10/27/03) (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Sunshine Cinema, and 34th Street Theatre.)

INTOLERABLE CRUELTY

Waggling his eyebrows and smiling broadly, George Clooney does some of his most self-confident acting yet as a sharp Los Angeles divorce lawyer, and Catherine Zeta-Jones is suitably deadpan as a voracious beauty who marries wealthy men and then finds spurious reasons to dump them and take their money. As these two lock horns, this Coen-brothers movie seems, for a while, to be the kind of glossy, high-style dialogue comedy from the forties that both celebrated and satirized heartless people with a gift for gab. But then the Coens fall into their usual goony-bird comedy games, and, though some of the jokes are funny, they are funny at a much lower level. Geoffrey Rush has a good bit at the beginning as a Hollywood sleaze who likes to sing along with his car radio.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

KILL BILL—VOL. 1

In this Quentin Tarantino fantasy pastiche of samurai and martial-arts films, the trunk of a body, its head lopped off, will spurt blood like a fountain. We know that the non-stop violence is not meant to be real: for starters, the blood looks like cranberry juice. Yet Tarantino is working in a photographic medium, and the real-world associations are not so easy to shrug off. Tarantino's heroine, Uma Thurman, kills another female warrior in front of the woman's little girl, and the child doesn't react. Tarantino wants the shock of a mother killed in front of her daughter without the audience undergoing any discomfort at all. The movie is what's formally known as decadence and commonly known as crap. Saying that it's an homage to long-established genres in Hong Kong doesn't reduce its pop-nihilistic stupidity. Some of the sequences have a scintillating visual flair, but you come out feeling nothing at all. And this is only the first half.—*D.D.* (10/13/03) (Astor Plaza, BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Nothing much happens in the new film by the writer-director Sofia Coppola, but she has first-rate abilities as an observer and as a rueful comedian, and much of the movie is sweetly funny and satisfying. In Tokyo, a burned-out American movie star named Bob Harris (Bill Murray) shows up to appear in a whiskey ad. Stranded in a sleekly pompous modern hotel, he can't connect with anything or even sleep, but he does hook up (chastely) with a very young woman, Charlotte (Scarlett Johansson), whose fashion-photographer husband (Giovanni Ribisi) is rapidly slipping away from her. Both Bob and Charlotte are in emotional limbo, and they become an odd, inappropriate couple. Murray has never been this quiet, this wary, this subtly acid before—or this warm, either. The drama of the movie, such as it is, lies in seeing just how much he will respond and when.—*D.D.* (9/15/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

MYSTIC RIVER

Clint Eastwood's sombre masterpiece, from a novel by Dennis Lehane (Brian Helgeland did the adaptation), is about a working-class Catholic community in Boston held in thrall by an old crime. Back in the seventies, one of three eleven-year-old boys who were close friends was taken away by two men pretending to be cops and sexually assaulted for days before he finally escaped. But it turns out that Dave (Tim Robbins) never escaped at all. Twenty-five years later, he is still shrouded in dreams and terror, and his two friends, Sean (Kevin Bacon), a homicide detective, and Jimmy (Sean Penn), an ex-con who runs a corner grocery, still feel the shame of not helping him. When Jimmy's nineteen-year-old daughter is murdered, the three are uneasily brought back together again. The movie's feeling for the neighborhood milieu is so convincing because there's no distinction between background and foreground—everything we see (faces, living rooms, back yards, weather, battered old cars) is dramatically relevant. Eastwood directs in a gray, end-of-day light and with a minimum of camera rhetoric; he lets the script and the actors do the work. Penn does a few semi-psychotic soliloquies in which he takes off into the stratosphere, joining Marlon Brando as one of the great tragic actors of the screen.—*D.D.* (10/13/03) (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

NIGHTS OF CABIRIA

Possibly Federico Fellini's finest film, and a work in which Giulietta Masina earns the praise she received for "La Strada." The structure is a series of episodes in the life of Cabiria (Masina), a shabby, aging, dreamy little Roman streetwalker—a girl whose hard, knowing air is no protection against her fundamental gullibility, which, we finally see, is her humanity and her saving grace. A famous actor (Amedeo Massari) picks her up and takes her to his luxurious villa; she goes to a cheap vaudeville show, and when the magician hypnotizes her, the innocent dreams of her adolescence pour out; a young man in the audience (François Périer) meets her and proposes to her, etc. Though the film seems free and almost unplanned, each apparent irrelevance falls into place. Originally released in 1957. In Italian.—*P.K.* (Guggenheim Museum; Nov. 8.)

PIECES OF APRIL

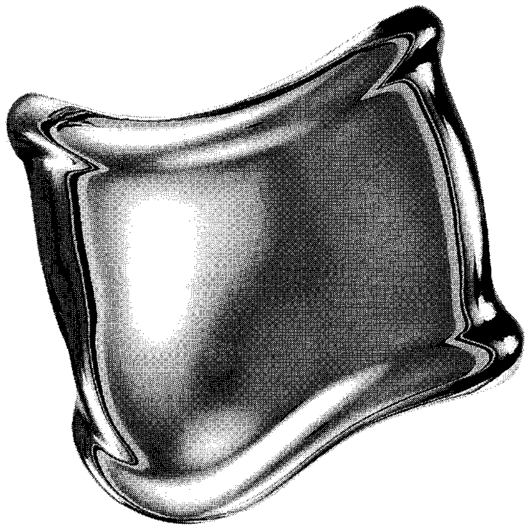
Katie Holmes continues to distance herself from her "Dawson's Creek" past, in this sensitive drama written and directed by Peter Hedges. The apple-cheeked actress surrounds her eyes with mascara and slumps her shoulders as April, a rebellious daughter living a shabby-chic life style on the Lower East Side. Her transformation works, for the most part, but the movie's real center of gravity is Patricia Clarkson, as April's mother, suffering from breast cancer. It's a challenging role; Hedges wrote the character as someone who can no longer tolerate sympathy, and Clarkson manages to express vulnerability along with the dry, caustic wit of a woman who has made her reckoning with death. The movie has April reuniting with her mother for Thanksgiving, but it's not a depressing or cheaply sentimental story. With Oliver Platt, Alison Pill, Alice Drummond, and Derek Luke lending fine support as family and boyfriend. Shot on digital video, in a style that is sometimes claustrophobic.—*Michael Agger* (Lincoln Square and Sunshine Cinema.)

RUNAWAY JURY

Though this legal thriller has been billed as Hoffman v. Hackman, the two screen legends have only one scene together, a crisp give-and-take in the men's room. What a letdown—as is the rest of this convoluted adaptation of a John Grisham novel. The courtroom should have been the center of the action. But, while Hoffman is in place as a principled attorney putting the gun companies on trial, Hackman remains off-site as a high-tech jury consultant who watches the proceedings through hidden cameras. It's left to John Cusack and Rachel Weisz, as a mysterious team also bent on manipulating the jury, to confront Hackman. Not exactly a title bout.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 62nd & Broadway, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SCARY MOVIE 3

The latest installment in the profitable series of horror-movie spoofs is also the first not written and directed by the fitfully brilliant, if uneven, Wayans brothers. Instead, the movie marks a return to an earlier era of kitchen-sink comedy: the director is David Zucker ("Airplane!," "The Naked



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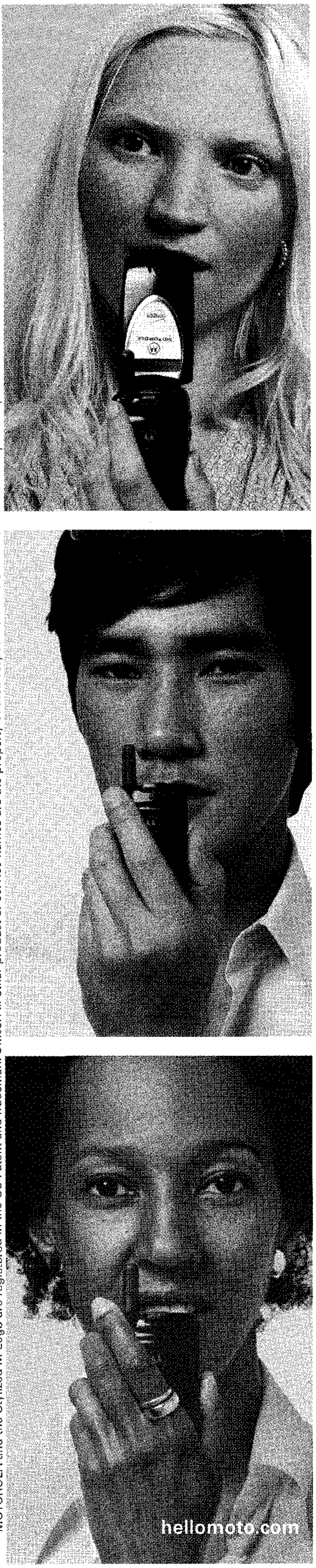

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Gun”), and Pat Proft, his longtime collaborator, is one of the many writers credited on the project. While the original “Scary Movie” was practically a scene-by-scene lampoon of the already parodic “Scream” franchise, this one, in classic Zucker fashion, is far more scattershot: it mocks the entire oeuvre of M. Night Shyamalan, the death-by-videotape shocker “The Ring” (one of the most inspired sequences is a parody of that film’s creepy black-and-white movie-within-a-movie), and even the hip-hop Horatio Alger story “8 Mile,” which isn’t a horror movie unless you happen to be Eminem’s mother. The spirit is willing, but the material is never quite there, despite game performances from Anna Faris, Charlie Sheen, Queen Latifah, Leslie Nielsen, Jenny McCarthy, Pamela Anderson, George Carlin, the rap star Ludacris, and the ludicrously accurate Michael Jackson impersonator Edward Moss.—*Ben Greenman* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and 34th Street Theatre.)

SCHOOL OF ROCK

Fans of Jack Black, your cup runneth over. He plays Dewey Finn, a mediocre but enthusiastic guitarist who bluffs his way into a substitute-teaching position at an exclusive private elementary school. At first, the job is purgatory, but then it’s paradise: some of the fifth graders turn out to be skilled classical musicians, and soon Black begins instructing them in the finer points of power chords. The movie nostalgically celebrates the liberating power of classic rock—the way it could impart coolness to all true believers. The kids are cute, and their acting, for better or worse, belongs to the amateurish tradition of “The Bad News Bears.” Mike White’s somewhat (for him) generic script sets the stage for Black to cut loose. The actor has a knack for moving his body in funny ways, and he sings and prances for the camera in a risky and aerobic performance. Joan Cusack offers fine support as the tightly wound principal. Richard Linklater directed, with his trademark touch of conveying milieu.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE SEVEN SAMURAI

Seven hired knights defend a village against forty mounted bandits—their pay a few handfuls of rice. This three-and-a-half-hour epic on violence and action—Akira Kurosawa’s masterpiece—has been widely imitated, but no one has come near it. With Toshiro Mifune and Takashi Shimura. Originally released in 1954. In Japanese.—*P.K.* (Moving Image; Nov. 8-9.)

SHATTERED GLASS

If you are searching for the definitive illustration of a tempest in a teacup, look no further. The writer and director Billy Ray has filmed the story of Stephen Glass, the young reporter who forged facts in a string of pieces that he wrote for *The New Republic* in the late nineteen-nineties. Glass is expertly played by Hayden Christensen as a puppyish geek, digging himself into ever deeper holes. Glass’s editors at the time were Michael Kelly (Hank Azaria), who was fired in the midst of the Glass farrago, and then Chuck Lane (Peter Sarsgaard), who fired Glass himself. Insiders may lap this stuff up, but visitors from the outside world will wonder what the fuss is about, and the movie is scripted, shot, and scored with such undying solemnity that fits of shameful giggles may be heard in cinemas across the land. With Chloë Sevigny, naturally, as one of Glass’s fellow-reporters.—*A.L.* (11/3/03) (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

THE STATION AGENT

The writer and director Tom McCarthy has turned his attention to a New Jersey backwater and come up with something lyrical, taciturn, and stripped of sentimentality. Peter Dinklage plays Fin, a dwarf who inherits a cabinlike home beside a railroad track in Newfoundland, in Morris County. Fin loves trains and not much else—hardly surprising, given that the world has shown him little more than a laugh and a sneer—and he is none too thrilled when his quiet space is invaded. Over time, though, he warms to the invaders: Joe (Bobby Cannavale), loud and lonely, who sells coffee and hot dogs from a neighboring van, and Olivia (Patricia Clarkson), a painter, still mourning the loss of a young son. The three of them fall in with one another, then fall out, then gradually fall back in; like some of the best short stories, the picture evades grandeur, mature enough to linger on what nearly happens. None of the central performers put a foot wrong, and McCarthy takes care not to insist that small is beautiful; rather, he and Dinklage leave us reflecting that small can be angry, tired, and tough.—*A.L.* (10/6/03) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

SYLVIA

If Mel Brooks had got his hands on the story of Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath, we could have been treated to a chorus line of suicidal poets chanting “It’s a gas!” As it is, we must make do with this bleak account of intertwining lives. Plath (Gwyneth Paltrow) meets Ted Hughes (Daniel Craig) in 1956 and marries him shortly afterward, to the polite consternation of her mother (Blythe Danner). The action switches from a morose England to a bright and bracing America, then back again; the second half of the picture leads us through the plunging of Plath’s moods, the publication of her poems, and her death, in 1963. The screenwriter, John Brownlow, and the director, Christine Jeffs, handle this material with patience and tact, and Paltrow is unafraid to show the sour and simmering side of her heroine. We come away convinced of the poets’ shared intensity, and deeply relieved that we are able to observe it from a safe distance.—*A.L.* (10/20/03) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TO BE AND TO HAVE

Lean, quick, and devastatingly adroit at the age of fifty-five, the teacher Georges Lopez presides over a one-room schoolhouse in this marvellous documentary shot in the Auvergne region of France. Monsieur Lopez divides the children, ages three to eleven, into three groups, and enforces strict discipline. No one could call his methods progressive; no one could call them ineffective, either. Watching the intensity of his work from moment to moment, child by child, reveals a craft exercised on a level at which skill and love have become indistinguishable. The filmmaker Nicolas Philibert brings the same kind of dedication to his own work. The children are great, unwary camera subjects, and Philibert gives us beautifully composed views of them, granting us enough time to observe each child closely, imagine his circumstances, and see what he does or doesn’t learn. The documentary is a deeply satisfying aesthetic and pedagogic experience, though Americans may wonder how such terrific children can become such irritating adults. In French.—*D.D.* (9/29/03) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

A soft-core renovation fantasy for educated women. Frances (Diane Lane), a San Francisco writer and teacher dumped by her adulterous husband, goes on a bus tour of Tuscany and falls in love with a crumbling old villa. After many blissfully undramatic episodes—an ancient wall falls down, a toilet mysteriously emits boiling water—the house gets scraped, plastered, painted, and gardened back into shape. It’s Frances’s life, of course, that really needs work. Luckily, in Rome, she finds Marcello (Raoul Bova)—yard-wide shoulders, blue eyes, all of Italian manhood in a white suit—and drives off with him in his Alfa Romeo convertible. There’s a lot more of this sort of harmless, pleasant, inconsequential stuff, with much of it redeemed by the good humor of the writer-director Audrey Wells, who serves up clichés and makes fun of them at the same time. With Sandra Oh as a sharp-tongued Bay Area lesbian friend of Frances’s who arrives in Tuscany to have a baby.—*D.D.* (9/29/03) (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

VERONICA GUERIN

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.)

VINCENT
Tim Burton's oft celebrated, rarely seen 1982 cartoon is a perfect six-minute film. With its Dr. Seuss-like verse narration and Charles Addams-meets-*Mad*-magazine black-and-white compositions, the short is a portrait (really, a self-portrait) of a pallid, lank-haired suburban lad, Vincent, who is obsessed with his namesake Vincent Price's horror flicks. Vincent the Younger has funnelled all his energy and creativity into cooking up a gothic fantasy world—one so inventive and engaging to the movie's audience (if not to his mother) that you'd hate to see him give it up to breathe fresh air and play ball. A combination of stop-motion puppets and drawn images helps Burton create an intricate alternate universe within the cartoon's "reality." Against all odds, the darkly whimsical rhymes work beautifully—partly because Price himself reads them splendidly.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; Nov. 8.)

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THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
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19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
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72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
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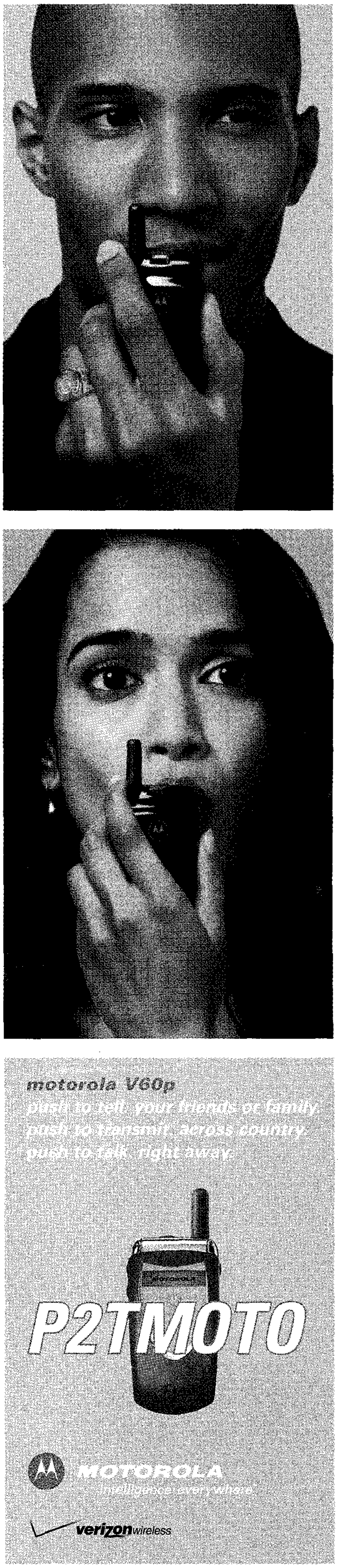
REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Nov. 7 at 7:30: "The Servant's Shirt" (1999, Mani Kaul; in Hindi). ♦ Through Nov. 19: A Tim Burton retrospective. Nov. 8 at noon: "Pee-Wee's Big Adventure" (1985). ♦ Nov. 8 at 2: "Ed Wood" (1994) and "Vincent" (†). ♦ Nov. 8 at 4:30: "Beetlejuice" (1988). ♦ Nov. 9 at 1:30: "Batman" (1989). ♦ Nov. 9 at 4: "Batman Returns" (1992). ♦ Repertory nights. Nov. 8-9 at 6:30: "The Seven Samurai" (†).
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Nov. 6-9: New Czech films. ♦ Sixties films. Nov. 10 at 7: "Zabriskie Point" (1970, Michelangelo Antonioni). ♦ In Memoriam: John Schlesinger. Nov. 11 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Darling" (1965).
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Nov. 5-11 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Eyes Without a Face" (†).
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Dec. 23: "Petits Bijoux," underappreciated French films. Nov. 11 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Break Up" (1972, Maurice Pialat; in French).
GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through Nov. 30: A Margarethe von Trotta retrospective. All films are in German. Nov. 6 at 2: "Sisters; or, the Balance of Happiness" (1979). ♦ Nov. 6 at 4: "Rosa Luxemberg" (1985). ♦ Nov. 6 at 6:30 and Nov. 9 at 2: "Rosenstrasse" (2003). ♦ Nov. 6 at 9: "Marianne and Juliane" (1981). ♦ Nov. 7 at 2: "Angst" (2002, Oskar Roehler). ♦ Through Jan. 31: "Kino 2003: New German Films." All films are in German. Nov. 7 at 4 and Nov. 9 at 7: "September" (2003, Max Färberböck). ♦ Nov. 7 at 6:15: "Next Generation," ten short works from German film schools. ♦ Nov. 8 at 1: "My Last Film" (2002, Oliver Hirschbiegel). ♦ Nov. 8 at 2:45: "The Longing" (2002, Iain Dilthey). ♦ Nov. 8 at 4:30: "Hello Dachau!" (2002, Brend Fischer). ♦ Nov. 8 at 6:30 and Nov. 10 at 8:30: "Führer Ex" (2002, Winfried Bonengel). ♦ Nov. 8 at 8:30 and Nov. 10 at 6: "Solino" (2002, Fatih Akin). ♦ Nov. 9 at 4:30: "Thank God, I'm in Films!" (2003, Lothar Lambert) and "The Curve" (2002, Felix Fuchssteiner). ♦ French cinema. Nov. 7 at 8:30: "Not For, or Against (Quite the Contrary)" (2003, Cédric Klapisch; in French).
GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—Through Jan. 14: A Federico Fellini retrospective. All films are in Italian. Nov. 5 at 7: "Variety Lights" (1950, Fellini and Alberto Lattuada). ♦ Nov. 7 at 7: "The White Sheik" (1952). ♦ Nov. 8 at 3: "The Swindle" (1955). ♦ Nov. 8 at 7: "Nights of Cabiria" (†).
SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. Nov. 7-8: "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" (1986, John Hughes).
THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Nov. 8 at 2: "The Decalogue: Parts I-V" (1988, Krzysztof Kieslowski; in Polish). ♦ Nov. 8-9 at 8:30: "The Decalogue: Parts IX and X" (1988, Kieslowski; in Polish). ♦ Nov. 9 at 2: "The Decalogue: Parts VI-X" (1988, Kieslowski; in Polish).
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Dec. 4: "Another Russia: A Tribute to Lenfilm Studios." All films are in Russian. Nov. 7 at 1: "Deputy for the Baltic Fleet" (1936, Iosef Heifits and Alexander Zarkhi). ♦ Nov. 7 at 3 and Nov. 11 at 1 and 9:15: "Twenty Days Without War" (1976, Alexei Guerman). ♦ Nov. 7 at 5 and Nov. 8 at 3: "Mama Got Married" (1969, Vitaly Melnikov). ♦ Nov. 7 at 7 and Nov. 9 at 3:30: "Granny" (2003, Lidiya Bobrova). ♦ Nov. 7 at 9:30, Nov. 8 at 9, and Nov. 9 at 9:30: "Father and Son" (2003, Alexander Sokurov). ♦ Nov. 8 at 1:30 and 5:15: "House in the Snow Drifts" (1927). ♦ Nov. 8 at 6:45: "Letters from a Dead Man" (1986, Konstantin Lopushansky). ♦ Nov. 9 at 5:45: "A Long Happy Life" (1966, Gennady Shpalikov). ♦ Nov. 9 at 7:45: "Saint's Day" (1989, Sergei Selyanov and Nikolai Makarov).



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THE
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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
UNCOVERED

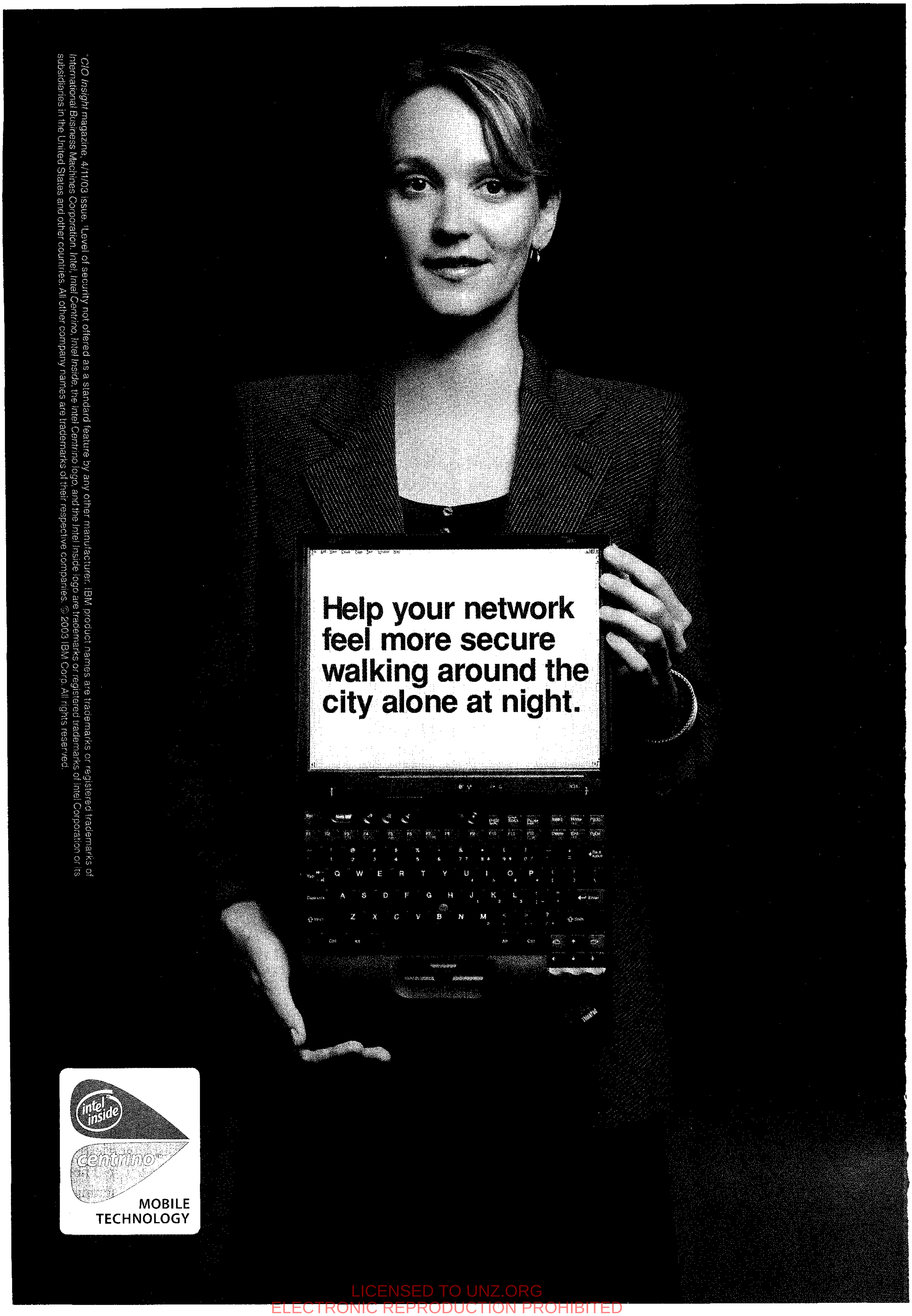
Last month, the *Blade*, a mid-sized family-owned newspaper published in Toledo, Ohio, devoted fifteen pages over four days to an exhaustive exposé of an élite Army unit, known as the Tiger Force, that spun out of control during the Vietnam War. The platoon, a forty-five-member, all-volunteer reconnaissance unit attached to the 101st Airborne Division, was ordered in early 1967 to take the fight to the enemy by setting up ambushes deep inside areas controlled by North Vietnamese and Vietnamese-nationalist forces. Instead, it took the fight to the unarmed civilian population.

From May through November of 1967, the *Blade* reported, the Tiger Force, while operating in and around Quang Ngai province, in South Vietnam's fiercely contested Central Highlands, murdered hundreds of noncombatant men, women, and children. Some victims were tortured and mutilated. Some were shot while begging for their lives. Some, hiding in bunkers, were killed by hand grenades flung inside. Soldiers collected ears as souvenirs, along with a few scalps and gold teeth.

In early 1971, the *Blade* wrote, these events became known to Army investigators, who, over a four-and-a-half-year period, conducted an inquiry that eventually concluded that eighteen Tiger Force members had participated in as many as twenty war crimes. It was the longest war-crimes investigation of the Vietnam War. But no one was charged, and in 1975 the investigation was quietly shut down. By then, six suspects had been allowed to resign from the Army, which removed them from military jurisdiction. The only soldier to be officially punished was a sergeant who had triggered the investigation by reporting that a member of the Tiger Force had decapitated an infant. (He was reprimanded for stating that he had witnessed the incident when in fact he had learned of it from others.) Two former Tiger Force members told the *Blade* that they had been encouraged by Army investigators not to say anything about what had occurred; in addition, investigators failed to pursue leads and made no effort to interview eyewitnesses in South Vietnam.

The *Blade's* Tiger Force story began, as many newspaper revelations do, with a tip and some documents that were made available to its Washington bureau. Two reporters, Michael D. Sallah and Mitch Weiss, spent eight months researching records and interviewing platoon members and Vietnamese survivors. The most telling evidence came from the participants. William Doyle, a former Tiger Force sergeant, said, "Nobody out there with any brains expected to live. So you did any goddamn thing you felt like doing—especially to stay alive." The officers assigned to lead the Tiger Force were fully involved in the atrocities, which began with the execution of prisoners. Former Private Ken Kerney was quoted as saying, "The commanders told me, 'What goes on here, stays here. You never tell anyone about what goes on here. If we find out you did, you won't like it.' "

At the height of the rampage, the Tiger Force platoon was operating a few dozen miles from a Quang Ngai hamlet that the Army called My Lai 4, and where, in March, 1968, more than five hundred Vietnamese civilians were massacred by a task force whose platoon leaders included William L. Calley, Jr. The *Blade* quoted a law professor as stating that My Lai might have been avoided if the senior officer corps had acted on com-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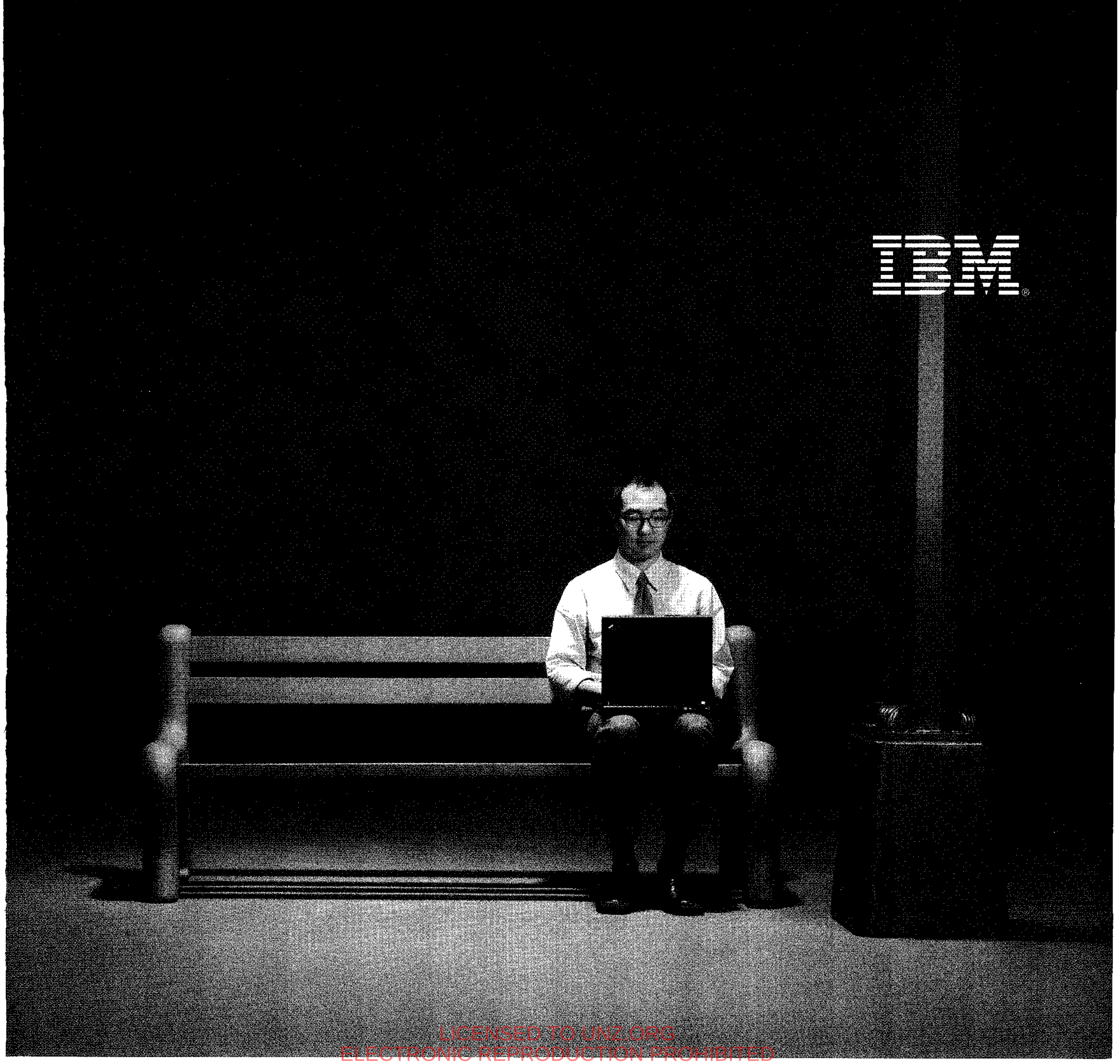


plaints of military brutality in Quang Ngai that had been filed by at least two soldiers. The *Blade* further reported that in the early nineteen-seventies, after Calley's conviction for the murder of twenty-two Vietnamese civilians, in March, 1971, and while the Army was publicly insisting that My Lai was an isolated incident, senior officials in the White House and the Pentagon were provided with periodic reports on the Tiger Force inquiry.

In fact, while the Army was conducting its internal investigation of My Lai, it discovered that a second large massacre had taken place on the same day in the same area, in a hamlet known as My Khe 4, but Lieutenant General William R. Peers, who had served for more than two years in Vietnam and who led the investigation, publicly denied that there were any other incidents. "It was not brought out to me in the evidence," Peers told reporters at the close of the inquiry, and he was not challenged on that assertion, even though two Army officers who had been present at My Khe had already been charged with war crimes. Twenty years later, the Army declassified an April, 1970, memorandum to the General responding to an article I had written about My Lai. It noted that I did not appear to "possess any substantive information concerning the suppression or cover-up aspects of the [My Khe 4] incident," but that I was being aided in my reporting by someone with access to the official records. It concluded, "The need to terminate such assistance to Mr. Hersh becomes increasingly important when consideration is given to the use Mr. Hersh would make of any information he obtained concerning command reaction and efforts of suppression."

John Dean, the former White House counsel to President Nixon, acknowledged that he had received a series of reports from the Army on the status of pending war-crimes investigations, including My Lai, but that they gave no hint of the extent of the crimes. "It doesn't get to the top unless there's a problem," he told me last month. "I had no knowledge of My Lai"—that is, its full horror—"until it hit the press."

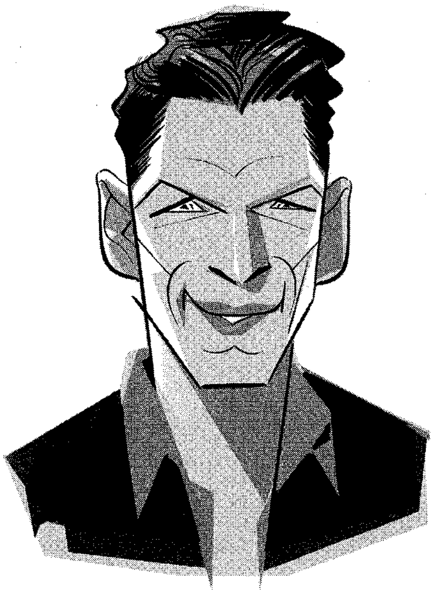
In war-crimes investigations, the disparity between the facts and the military's official versions of them has repeatedly been exposed, often with bruising consequences, by an independent press. The *Blade's* extraordinary investigation of Tiger Force, however, remains all but invisible. None of the four major television networks have picked it up (although CBS and NBC have been in touch with the *Blade*), and most major newspapers have either ignored the story or limited themselves to publishing an Associated Press summary. In a column published on the first day of the series, Ron Royhab, the *Blade's* executive editor, pointedly wrote that the decision to run the Vietnam stories now had "nothing to do" with the current military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As he told me, "We can't have this kind of information and sit on it, because then we'd be a party to a coverup." There is, of course, a hesitancy in time of war—and, in particular, during an increasingly unpopular war against an entrenched guerrilla enemy—to publish stories that could be interpreted as undermining military morale. And news organizations instinctively debunk scoops from their competitors, especially those in smaller markets. It may be that others in the media are planning to do their own Tiger Force investigations. Let's hope so. Terrible things always happen in war, and the responsibility of the press is to do exactly what the *Blade* has done—to find, verify, and publish the truth.

—*Seymour M. Hersh*

CENTRAL CASTING
THE RACE CARD

In the new film "The Human Stain," based on the Philip Roth novel, an actor named Wentworth Miller plays the young Coleman Silk—or, rather, the young Anthony Hopkins. (Hopkins, you see, plays the older Wentworth Miller.) Silk is a black man who, by dint of the lightness of his skin and his determination to circumvent prejudice, passes himself off, for most of his life, as a white man—a Jewish white man. In real life, Hopkins is a Welshman (white, not Jewish), but Miller's origins are mixed. His father is black; his mother is white. (To be precise, his father is African-American-Jamaican-German-English; his mother is Russian-Dutch-French-Syrian-Lebanese; and, like most people, he has a Jewish great-grandmother, on his father's side.) Miller doesn't look black, whatever that means, but neither does Hopkins, or Silk. (Miller doesn't look anything like Hopkins, either.)

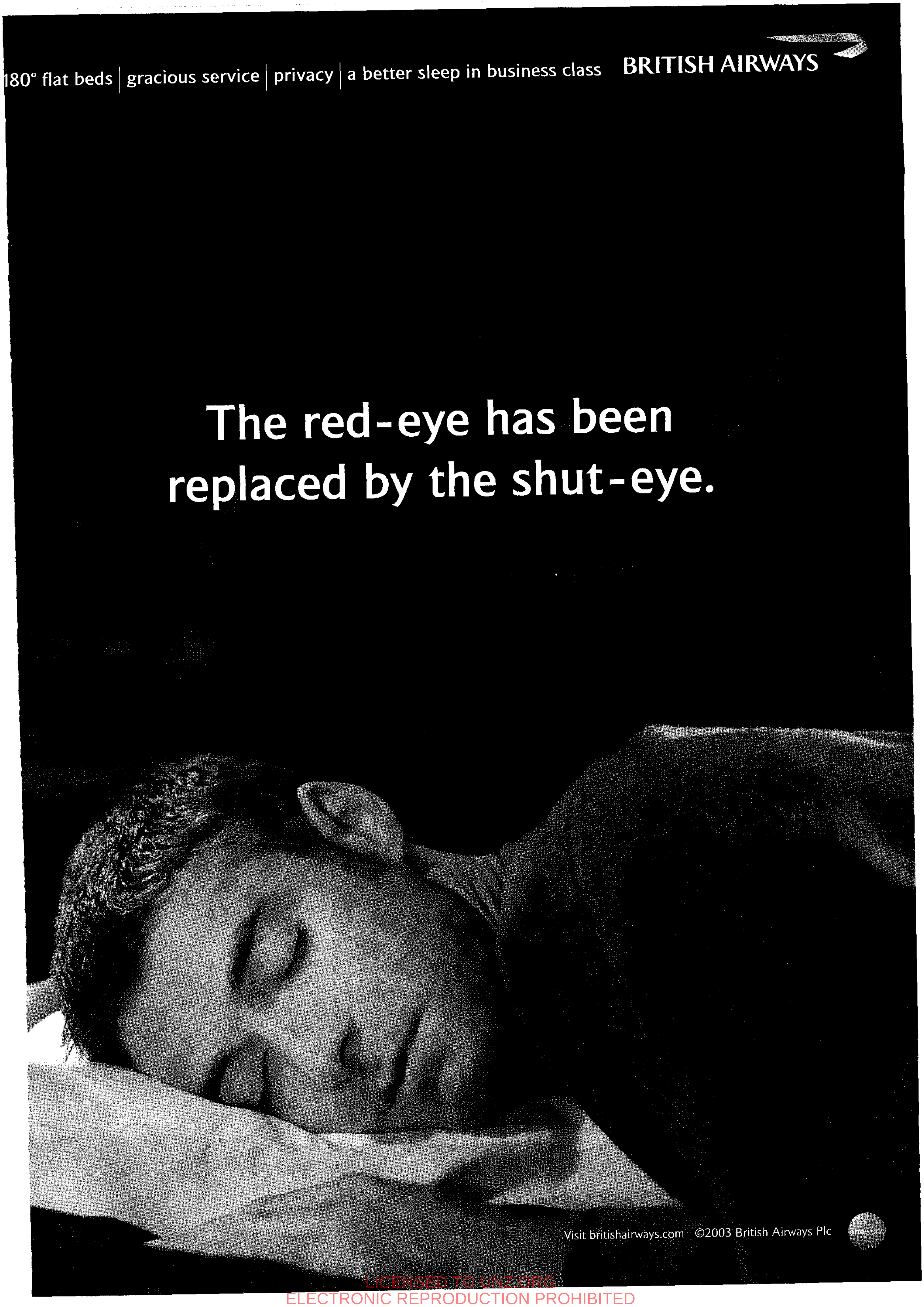
In the story, Silk, a classics professor, loses his job when he is accused of racism for using the word "spooks" to describe two black students who have never shown up for his class. He means that they're so reliably absent as to be nonexistent, but the students and the school administrators hear something else. Silk holds on to the race card, choosing not to reveal that he's black—a fact that would, presumably, exonerate him. Down goes Silk.



Wentworth Miller

It so happens that Wentworth Miller found himself in a similar jam when he was in college. As a junior at Princeton, in 1994, he published, in the *Daily Princetonian,* a cartoon featuring Cornel West, who was then a professor of African-American studies there but who had just been hired away by Harvard. The cartoon depicted Muffy, a white Harvard student, imagining her first class with West, who is saying, "Today's lecture is entitled, 'Rhythm—Why None of You Have It, and How You Can Get It.' " It also described West as "newly purchased," which is academe-speak for a new hire.

This did not go over well—"newly purchased" was taken to be a reference to slavery—and within days the paper had run angry letters signed by dozens of students and faculty members, including the novelist Toni Morrison, symposia had been convened, and the school had been plunged into one of those predictable con-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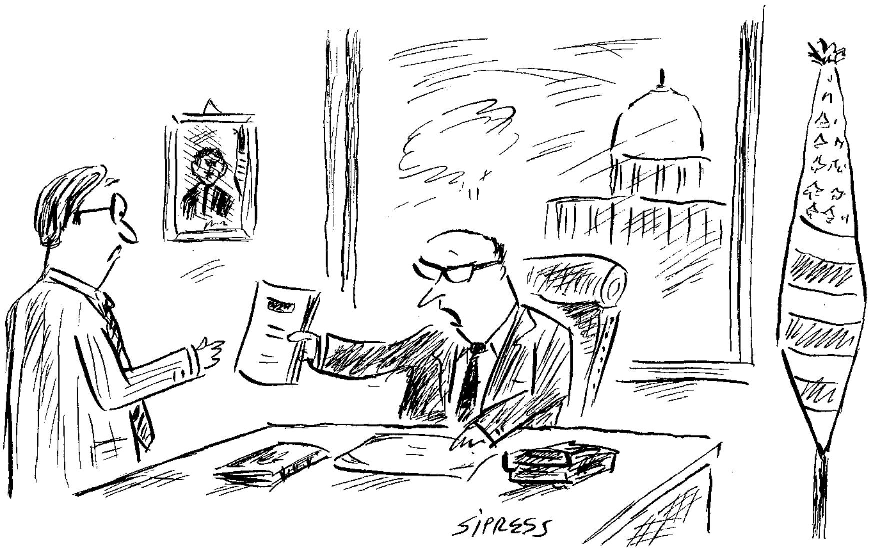


“Leak this against my wishes.”

• •

vulsions of recrimination and argument. The story made the *Times*, and Wentworth Miller, who everyone assumed was white, was transformed into a controversial figure: the campus bigot. Yet, like Silk, at no point did he bring up his background, choosing instead to mutter some sentences about an attempt to lampoon racial stereotypes. His own race card went unplayed.

“To be perfectly clear, passing”—that is, trying to pass oneself off as white, as Silk does—“is something that has never crossed my mind,” Miller, who was brought up in Park Slope, said last week, over breakfast. He speaks with great precision and doesn’t blink very often. “Instead of stepping forward and explaining what I’d meant by the cartoon and positing my own racial background as evidence that I’d really meant no harm, I chose to remain silent. My attitude was, If they don’t get it, I don’t have to explain it, which was my way of saying that if they don’t get me, I don’t have to explain me. The people who knew me on campus and knew my background knew where I was coming from, but I think for most people I was just a name in the paper, and they probably assumed I was white.”

This, apparently, was the assumption when, seven years later, Miller was trying out for the part in “The Human Stain.” On this occasion, however, he was moved, either by emotion or by exigency, to posit his background. At the audition, he told the casting director that the script resonated with him, because, he said, “I’m a minority.” He soon found himself recounting the Cornel West cartoon episode, and then he read some scenes. “When I was done, she was in tears and I was in tears,” Miller recalled. After he was invited back for a screen test, though, his manager passed along a request: “They want to make sure you are who you say you are.” So Miller went to Kinko’s and made color copies of family photographs, and soon he had his first role in a motion picture.

After shooting “The Human Stain,” Miller wrote a letter to Cornel West, in which he apologized for the cartoon in the *Princetonian* and told him about his turn as Coleman Silk. He heard nothing back, but, as luck would have it, West, who is a friend of the actress Anna Deveare Smith (Miller’s mother in the film), showed up at the New York première, a couple of weeks ago. “The first thing he did was give me this big bear hug,” Miller said, “which really meant the world to me.”

—*Nick Paumgarten*

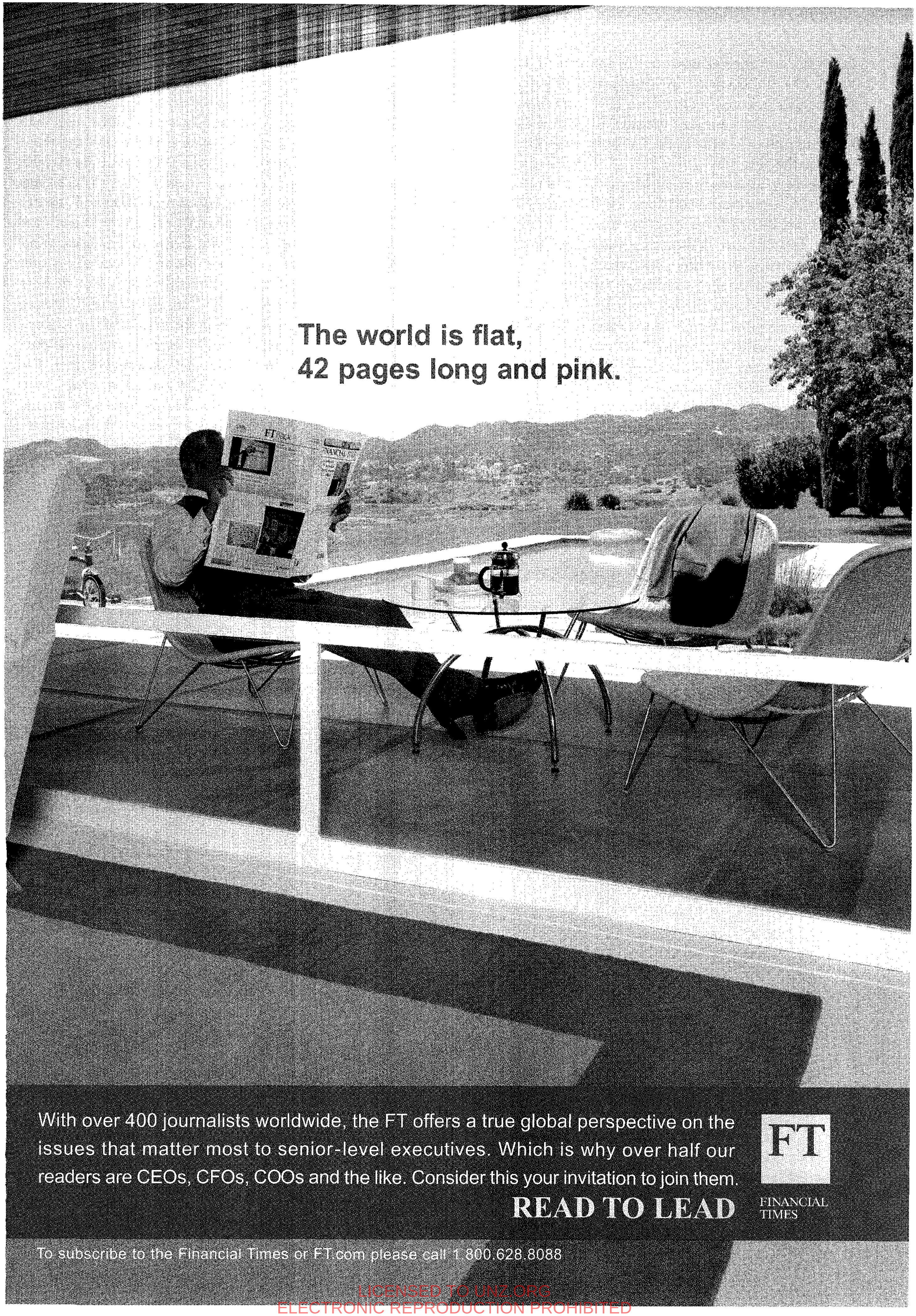
INK

THE ALL-TIME GREATS

Roger Hertog, the vice-chairman of Alliance Capital, the chairman of the Manhattan Institute, and the moneybags behind the New York *Sun*, opened up his Fifth Avenue apartment the other night for a party to celebrate the publication of a new book by Charles Murray, entitled “Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 B.C. to 1950.” Halfway through the evening, Hertog asked for a few moments of quiet from his guests—Norman Podhoretz, Michael Barone, and other conservative eminences—in order to say a few bonhomous words about the accomplishments of the guest of honor. One of the things about Charles Murray’s books, Hertog announced, is that they are almost all wrong. At least, that’s what the guests at the back of the room thought they heard him say, which provoked perplexed mutterings and wary smiles until it was ascertained, from a listener with keener hearing, that what Hertog had actually said is that the books are almost all *long*.

Murray is certainly accustomed to having his books described as all wrong. His previous book, “The Bell Curve” (1994), which he co-wrote with Richard J. Herrnstein, contended, among other things, that inferior scores on standardized intelligence tests by blacks in America, and the consequent low economic standing of African-Americans, were due in significant measure to hereditary factors rather than environmental ones, and that spending on welfare was a waste of time and money. It sparked outrage, much debunking, and an armload of “Bell Curve” spinoffs (“The Bell Curve Wars”; “The Bell Curve Debate”; “Measured Lies: The Bell Curve Examined”). It also sold nearly four hundred thousand copies.

Murray and his publisher, HarperCollins, are surely hoping that “Human Accomplishment” might turn out to be equally controversial, although the argument of the new book, which Murray originally wanted to call “Truth and Beauty,” is somewhat less incendiary. Murray has coined a new expression, the Lotka Curve, to describe a statistical pattern based upon the research of an obscure American-Hungarian mathematician and demographer, which, he argues, provides an objective measure of human excellence that is applicable not only in spheres of endeavor such as baseball but in areas of creativity and thought, where subjective judgment is more typically thought to hold sway. The Lotka Curve, Murray admitted at the party, is unlikely to gain the currency achieved by his ear-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lier title. "Someone pointed out to me that Latka is a character in 'Taxi,' and someone else pointed out that it is a Jewish kind of potato pancake," he said. "So I am not sure where the Lotka Curve is going in the long run."

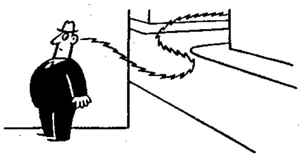
The best-read section of Murray's book—which is indeed very long—will be the one in which he offers his top-twenty lists of history's most important thinkers, artists, and writers, and which reads rather like what would happen if you locked Harold Bloom in a room with a pen, a piece of paper, and David Letterman. Aristotle is the top Western philosopher, with Plato and Kant getting the silver and the bronze and Fichte coming in at No. 20. Marie Curie, one of only two women to make any of the lists, is the fourteenth most important physicist, four places behind her husband, Pierre. Shakespeare is the West's No. 1 writer, with Tolstoy clocking in at No. 10, well behind Virgil and Rousseau. Mozart and Beethoven are tied for most important composer, with Bach edging out Wagner for third. Murray's lists will doubtless provide passing cocktail-party chatter—why is Picasso the runner-up to Michelangelo, with Leonardo relegated to fourth place and Rembrandt in seventh? And why is Byron the West's ninth most important writer ever?—but his contention that Du Fu is a more important figure in Chinese literature than Li Bo is unlikely to spark policy debates at the highest levels of government.

Murray, whom the *Times* recently described as "ruggedly handsome"—"Another vivid example of the *Times*' objectivity," Hertog said, chuckling, in his remarks—refers in the book to the "extraordinary level of talent reflected in the products of today's popular culture." Since these products are excluded from Murray's rosters of accomplishment, owing to the imposition of a 1950 cutoff date, Murray was asked what emanations of popular culture would appear on his own top-twenty list.

"The movie 'Groundhog Day,'" he immediately offered. "It is a brilliant moral fable, offering an Aristotelian view of the world." What else? "The genre of the hardboiled detective novel," he said. "I think people may still be reading Sherlock Holmes two hundred years from now." How about television? "I don't go along with the 'I Love Lucy' stuff," he said, as if an "I Love Lucy" lobby were outside, picketing the Hertog home. "I think that is pretty evanescent." What about music? "The thing with Beatles songs is, do you think they are great because they are great or because of the life you were having when you heard them, when you were in college?" he said. "I mean, it is not the case that 'Norwegian Wood' is a masterpiece, although it is O.K."

—*Rebecca Mead*

CALL LOG
I'M LOSING YOU



Last week, around the globe, airplane radio communication was disrupted and satellite signals were lost as solar flares sent geomagnetic storms into Earth's atmosphere. Here in New York, meanwhile, Mayor Bloomberg held a press conference to discuss some more banal but no less consequential signal interruptions: lost cell-phone calls. He was concerned, he said, about the "frustrating and too common" occurrence of so-called cellular dead zones (or black holes), where, for whatever reason, wireless connections are routinely thwarted. More than a hundred thousand 911 calls did not go through last year in New York as a result of mobile-phone failure, and so the Mayor has asked disgruntled customers to report the lost-call specs, by intersection and service provider. A preliminary list will be released in three weeks, so that consumers may decide, as Bloomberg put it, whether to "carry a separate phone or avoid those areas."

There are about two million more registered cell phones in the city than there are citizens, so it's safe to assume that the dead-zone line will be busy. (According to City Hall, several thousand reports were logged on the first day.) This town is teeming with Bermuda Triangles. Who doesn't have one of his own? Alongside the Plaza; outside Moe's bar, in Fort Greene; the Carl Schurz Park dog run; smack dab in the middle of the Eighty-sixth Street Transverse, just by the precinct house. The voice strobes, then disintegrates—*Can you hear me now, can you hear me now, I'm losing you.* New York is the nation's worst major cell-phone market, according to a recent survey, and Bloomberg is not the first politician to take a stand. Last month, Senator Charles Schumer, who had already introduced a "Cell Phone Users Bill of Rights" in Congress, released a blacklist of his own, identifying sixty-five dead zones citywide. "Almost nothing makes you angrier than when you suddenly lose your cell-phone connection and can't get it back," Schumer said.

Except, of course, when you don't mind losing your cell-phone connection. The onset of static can be a blessing, handy camouflage in a tiresome conversation—*Are you there? Mom?* The very existence of dead zones affords you the opportunity to take a call from an odious acquaintance or in-law and then blip out before a plan can be made or a decision reached. And so false friendships, essential to the workings of any city, can flourish.

Cell signals, welcome or not, are subject to obstruction from buildings, hills, and weather patterns. Reflections off glass-fronted buildings, water, and even foliage can create gaps or shadows within an otherwise well-covered area. A dead zone may be as small as two feet in diameter (so holding your arm up or out may just work), and it can shift from day to day, or even disappear. Its precursor, in a sense, is the pay phone with no dial tone.

Using Schumer's list as a guide, a cellular detective set out on foot last week to collect dead-zone dispatches. (Service provider: Verizon.) He ranged Third Avenue, past Fifty-second, then Fifty-seventh, and eventually Sixty-eighth. Through three supposedly dead zones

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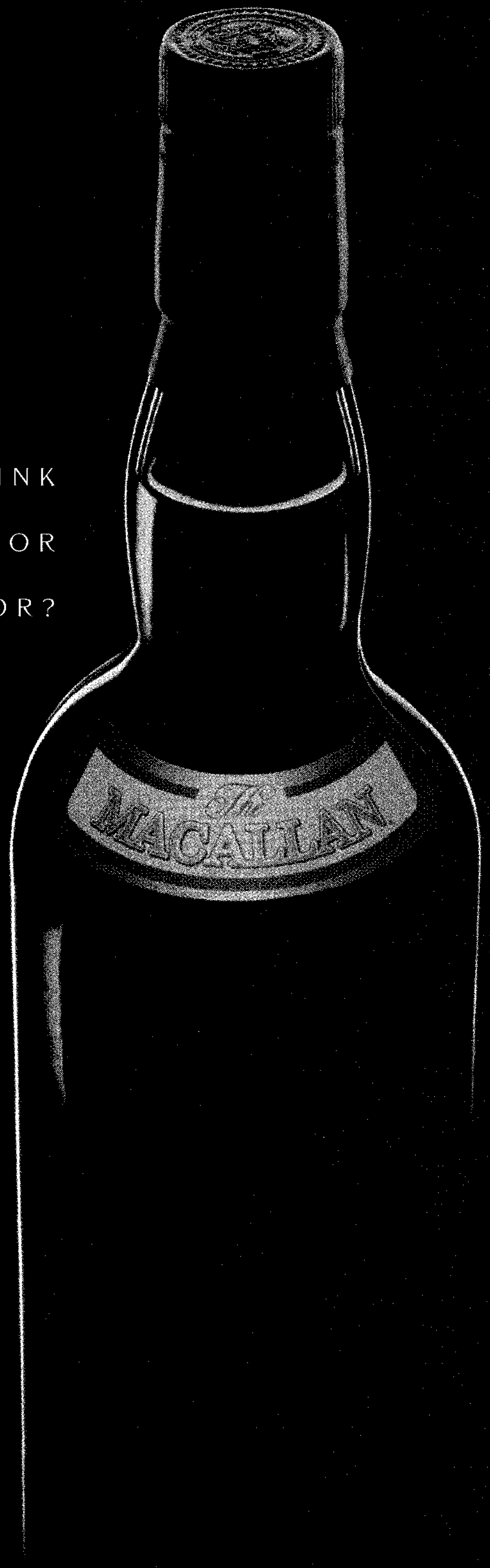

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his signal indicator held steady at four bars. Over, then, to York Avenue, a notorious strip for subscribers to Sprint and A.T. & T. Dozens of pedestrians streamed past with hands held to ears: their friends, it appeared, could hear them.

Down in the East Village, the sleuth encountered more of the same. At Second Avenue and Ninth Street, a purported Sprint black hole, he wandered into Starbucks and asked about service interruptions. "I don't have a cell phone, but people talk on their phones in here *all the time*," an employee said. If it is true, as Bloomberg suggested, that "cell phones don't work exactly at the wrong time," might it also be possible that they *do* work exactly when you're trying to prove they don't?

And then, finally, a dead zone, on Wall Street just east of Broad. It was tiny, maybe the size of a stretch limo. For several paces, the phone display read "searching for signal," before giving way to two bars, then four again. It was Halloween morning, and on the steps of an Equinox gym, well within the zone, a group in costume—dominatrix cop, men in black lingerie—posed for pictures.

"Holy shit! You gotta see this," a passerby said into his StarTac, stopping to gawk. "Hello?" He glanced at his phone, then took a few more steps toward Broad Street. "Hello?" Another step and then—back in business—he resumed the conversation, shaking his head. "You should've seen . . ." The morning rush abated, and soon, like a ghost, or a puff of wind on a dead day, the zone was gone.

—Ben McGrath

DEPT. OF AMPLIFICATION
WHIFF

William Shawn, this magazine's editor absolute for a great many years, used to tell his nonfiction writers that the world's worst subject was the future. Hard to tie down, the future could too easily come loose and take off on unexpected vectors. While he did not in any way wish to intrude on a writer's sovereign franchise to think through ideas that might occur, it would nonetheless, he felt, be best to avoid the future. Reacting to a proposal of mine, he once slightly modified his position, informing me that the future was actually the second-worst subject in the world, the worst being the Loch Ness monster. In the twenty-some years that I submitted ideas to him, he did, as it happened, accept two stories that relied on projection into chartless time. The first had to do with a rigid airship of novel configuration—a bulbous delta more than a thousand feet long and a thousand feet wide—that was intended to cross oceans carrying vast amounts of freight and then touch down anywhere at all in the least-developed countries of the world, "eliminating the need for roads, railroads, tunnels, bridges, airports, storage facilities, and prepared harbors." Founded by the minister of the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Trenton, New Jersey, the company that meant to build the airship would also build hundreds like it, using lighter-than-air flight to "revolutionize missionary aviation." It would be "a Faith Fleet, a Christian Freight Line marked with the insignia of the National Council of Churches, to carry food, goods, and Bibles to people in what the church called the opportunity countries—fifty transformers to the Voltaic Republic, a hundred thousand Bibles to Nigeria, a million peaches to the Haut-Katanga." The story ran serially in three *New Yorkers* in February, 1973. For thirty years, the twenty-six-foot prototype whose flight tests the articles described has been hidden under a large black cloth in a T-hangar at a central New Jersey airfield, awaiting further developments.

Also in the seventies, I undertook to describe, with Mr. Shawn's faint blessing, a floating nuclear power plant that would produce twenty-three hundred megawatts of electricity and was meant to float 2.8 miles off the New Jersey coast near Atlantic City. The plant would consist of two state-of-the-art reactors, each in its own hull built by the Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company, and protected by a penannular breakwater that would be the largest structure ever built on earth. The breakwater's component parts would look like the knucklebones of sheep—eighteen thousand knucklebones made of concrete, and of such magnified size that huge barges would carry them to the site a few at a time. At a facility in Jacksonville, I visited the hulls, which were under construction. Wading around in the University of Florida's indoor ocean, in Gainesville, I watched a model supertanker being driven onto concrete knucklebones by hurricane waves. At the site off New Jersey, I got good and seasick in a fishing boat full of scientists assessing future impacts on benthic life. The piece ran in *The New Yorker* of May 12, 1975. In 1978, the Public Service Electric & Gas Company cancelled its order for the nuclear plant. The accident at Three Mile Island occurred in the following year, reducing toward zero the appeal of floating fission.

And now the United States Golf Association has announced that it is not, after all, going to move its museum from Far Hills, New Jersey, to the site of the old Russian Tea Room, on Fifty-seventh Street in Manhattan, a plan I described in *The New Yorker* of March 31, 2003. The U.S.G.A. bought the Tea Room scarcely a year ago, and began to design space in its six stories for Iron Byron, the robot golfer, the films of Bobby Jones teaching the game to W. C. Fields, the club that Alan Shepard swung on the moon, and thousands of other items. The U.S.G.A. was unaware, however, that museums in the State of New York are subject to the oversight of the New York Board of Regents and are required to have boards of trustees independent of parent organizations. Seeking no such caddie, the U.S.G.A. prefers to call its own shots. There was a cost overrun, too: "At the same time, it became clear that extensive renovations—including the addition of a seventh floor—would have been necessary to create the type of world-class facility that the U.S.G.A. sought to establish. Such work would have escalated the total expense of the project to a level that the Association felt was inappropriate." Tea Room For Sale.

Three swings at the future. Three consistent whiffs. Mr. Shawn may have had a point. Mr. Shawn seems to have had such a cogent point that it has set me feverishly to work. Abandoning all unfinished projects set in the near, middle, and deep past, I intend to complete as soon as I can—certainly in this autumn of 2003—a detailed description, in the future definite, of the second Administration of George W. Bush.

—John McPhee

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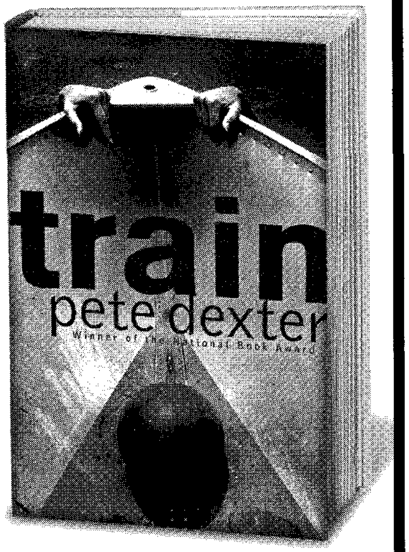

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LETTER FROM LOS ANGELES

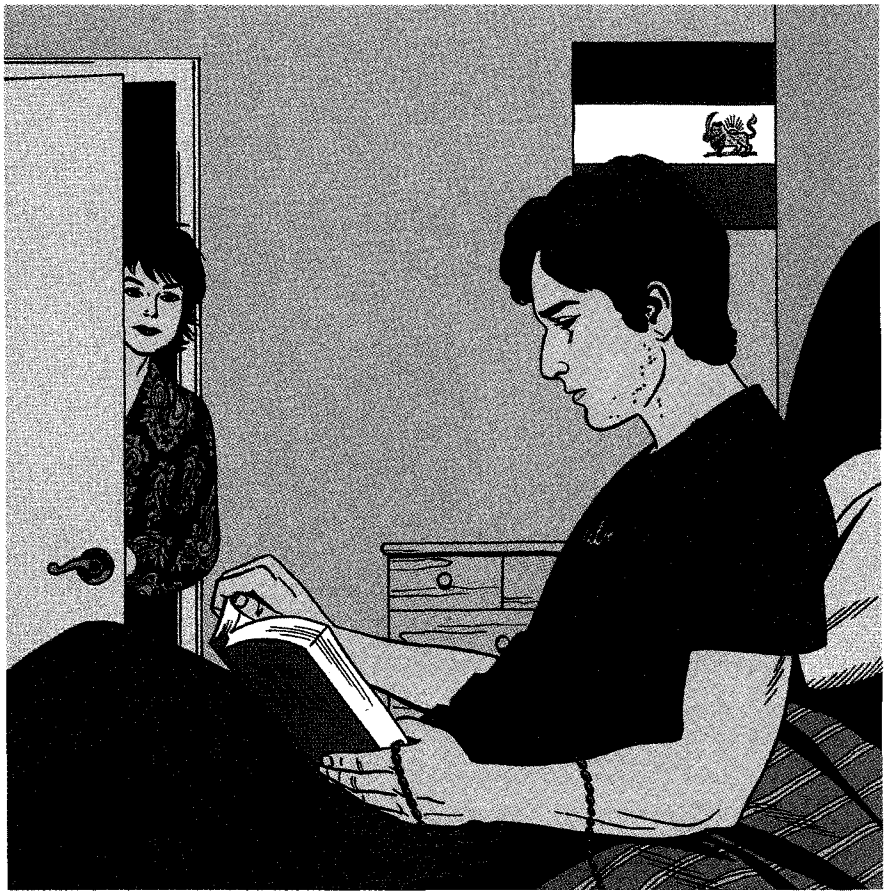
PERSIA ON THE PACIFIC

A second generation yearns for a country it has never seen.

BY TARA BAHRAMPOUR

On June 21, 1998, Iran's national soccer team walked onto the field in its first World Cup tournament since the country had overthrown the Shah, installed an Islamic government, and taken fifty-two Americans hostage, nineteen years earlier. As millions watched on live television, the players handed white good-will bouquets to their American opponents. Then Iran beat the U.S. team, 2–1. From Tehran to Toronto, Iranian teen-agers danced on cars and old women in head scarves lifted their faces to the sky and praised God.

In Westlake Village, California, in a two-story stucco house on a cul-de-sac dotted with lemon trees and oversized roses, a twelve-year-old boy named Jonathan Dorriz watched the game with his father. Jonathan was born in the San Fernando Valley, and he didn't know much about soccer or about Iran, his parents' home country. But when the Iranian team scored its second goal, he jumped on his father's back and they galloped around the house, yelling until they were hoarse. Jonathan had always lived among expatriate Iranians, but that evening, on a visit to family friends, he saw them in a different light: "It was the first time I'd seen Iranians all rooting for the same thing instead of arguing about 'the Shah did this,' 'the mullahs did that.' I saw a sense of unity, and I felt like this was something important." Soon afterward, Jonathan began to go by his Iranian name, Parshaw.



Parshaw Dorriz's room is decorated with emblems both of Islam and of the Shah.

JAIME HERNANDEZ

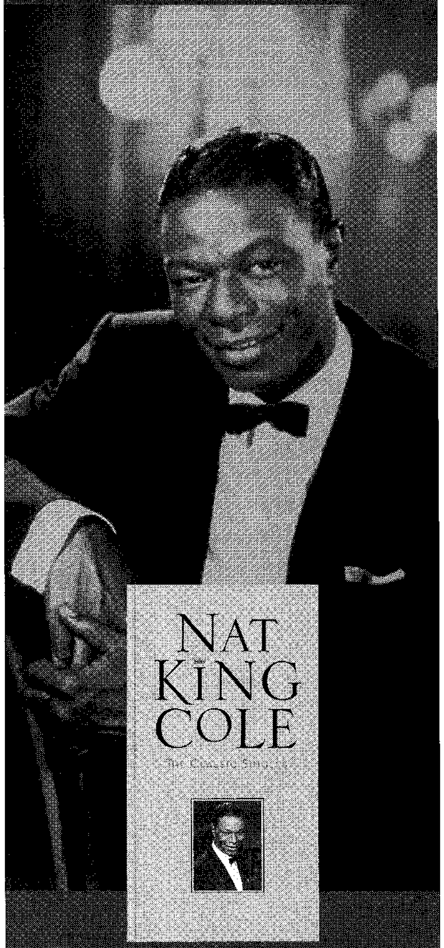
Now in his senior year of high school, Parshaw is a handsome, loose-limbed boy with dark wavy hair, warm brown eyes, and a prominent nose. He wears long T-shirts and baggy jeans. He likes to cruise around the neighborhood—a circle of well-kept houses radiating out from the local elementary school—in his black Lexus GS 300, a seventeenth-birthday present from his parents. When I visited him last spring, he drove me past Westlake's jagged hills, which were dusted with a light green that set off the pink mansions along the ridges. On the main strip, Thousand Oaks Boulevard, each tree was tied with a neat yellow ribbon, and luxury-car dealerships shared street frontage with a set of international-themed gardens. Dangling one arm over the steering wheel, Parshaw sang along with Mansour, a local Iranian pop singer. He pointed out the park where a recent Iranian New Year's picnic had attracted so many people that valet parking was required. He told me about the posses of Iranian tough guys who come in from the Valley to strut in front of Westlake's Iranian girls. But there was something a little self-conscious about Parshaw's identification with Iran. His Farsi, which he has been improving with the help of a teach-yourself CD-ROM, was laced with charming mistakes. At the Iranian market on Thousand Oaks, he excitedly ordered rosewater-flavored "Mashti Malone," a locally made ice cream, and a videotape of "Noon-o-Goldoon," an Iranian movie. He smiled as he spoke, as if he were using passwords known to only a select few.

Half an hour down the 405 freeway, on Westwood Boulevard, you can tell by the way people cross the street that you're in the Iranian part of Los Angeles. Instead of waiting at the crosswalk, pedestrians dash between moving cars, careful to lock eyes with each driver before striding into a lane. This is how people cross the street in Iran, and here in Irangeles the cars slow down as if they know whom they're up against.

Two decades ago, this treeless stretch of road, just south of Wilshire Boulevard, was an unremarkable strip with a dry cleaner, a hair salon, and a restaurant called the All American Burger. My family came here regularly then. In January of 1979, my Iranian father and my American mother moved our family from Iran to the United States and settled in Portland, which seemed to be populated entirely by pale-skinned, third-generation Oregonians and was as un-Iranian as a city could be. But my grandparents lived in Los Angeles, and when we visited we would lose my father for days at a time to two Iranian bookstores on Westwood whose shopkeepers always had the latest news from Iran.

Today, those stores are surrounded by Farsi-scripted awnings offering photocopies, wedding videos, tailoring, ice cream, rugs, groceries, and body waxing. The larger of the two bookstores, Ketab, now sells CDs and videos and publishes the bilingual Iranian Yellow Pages, which has thickened over the years to more than a thousand pages, a sixth of which feature ads for Iranian doctors and dentists. The store also sells rustic reminders of home: wooden backgammon sets, Esfahani printed tablecloths, and *givehs*—woven peasant shoes that most Los Angeles Iranians would never have considered putting on their feet when they lived in Iran. The Canary Chicken House, down the street, serves *kalepacheh*, a stew made of sheep's head, hooves, and eyeballs, which, in Iran, is traditionally eaten for breakfast by poor laborers. Last fall, a billboard paid for by a local exile group informed northbound traffic here that ten thousand political prisoners had been killed by the Islamic regime.

It is not surprising that a nondescript street could be so quickly transformed into a thriving immigrant hub; what is unusual is this one's location, sandwiched between Beverly Hills and Brentwood, in one of the world's most exclusive swaths of real estate. Here and in surrounding neighborhoods, the Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf cafés overflow with dark-haired men and women sipping Darjeeling and speaking the Farsi-English hybrid Finglish. Downtown, a dilapidated alley has become a cheap clothing bazaar where Mexican employees speak Farsi with their Iranian bosses. In a San Fernando Valley strip mall, I came across a little market with handwritten signs in Farsi: "Sweet Lemons Have Arrived" and "Pomegranates Just in from Saveh" (a town in Iran that is famous for the fruit). It was a joke; there were no sweet lemons, and the giant pomegranates arranged in a pyramid



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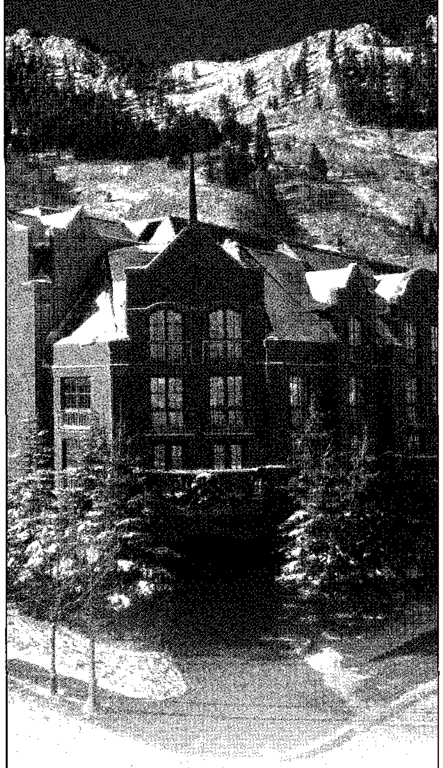

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came from Mexico. "Better soil than here," the shopkeeper explained. "More like Iran."

Last fall, the Iranian community flocked to the Music Hall Theatre, in Beverly Hills, to see "Low Heights," a movie about a man in Iran who, desperate to get his extended family to a country that offers more opportunities, hijacks a plane with his relatives on board. A heated family argument ensues over possible destinations, and a young man who has never left Iran cries out, "If anything happens to me, my last wish is that my body be buried in Los Angeles!"

Los Angeles and Iran lie at opposite ends of the world, but for the past twenty-five years—ever since the first Iranians fleeing the revolution established an exile outpost in L.A.—the two places have been closely linked. Under the Shah, when, as one Iranian writer put it, Iran suffered from "Westoxication" (a tendency to view all things Western as a gold standard), L.A. was Tehran's sister city. Under the Islamic regime, it became a wicked stepsister. In Iran, people were arrested for possessing Western or Iranian music recorded in America, as well as for watching "Baywatch" and "Beverly Hills 90210," both of which were long-running favorites on illegal satellite TV. In L.A., especially during the hostage crisis, many Iranians began to refer to themselves as "Persian." (As one man explained, "You think of Iran, you think of crazy mullahs; you think of Persia, you think of Persian carpets, Persian cats. Which would *you* rather be associated with?")

The L.A. area is home to the largest Iranian community outside Iran. (The number of Iranians in the greater metropolitan area falls somewhere between a hundred thousand and six hundred thousand, depending on which source you choose to believe.) The city has Iranian Republican clubs, Iranian Rotary clubs, and Iranian night clubs; Iranian bank tellers, Iranian insurance agents, and even a few Iranian homeless people. For a time, Westlake Village had an Iranian mayor, and two Iranians recently ran for governor. Like Tehran, L.A. is a mountain-ringed, traffic-plagued, smog-filled bowl, where Iranian retirees putter in gardens and wait at bus stops. For exiles living elsewhere, visiting the city can feel as it might for an American who, coming across a U.S. military base in a strange land, suddenly finds himself awash in Kraft Singles and Lynyrd Skynyrd records. It can be comforting, but it can also be suffocating. Maz Jobrani, a thirty-one-year-old standup comedian who moved south from Marin County and got a job at a Westwood record store, recalled a fellow-Iranian walking in. "In Marin, you'd be, like, 'Hey, are you Iranian? What's your name? I think my dad knew your dad in Iran.' Here it was 'Hey, are you Iranian?' and the guy goes, 'Yeah, so?' "

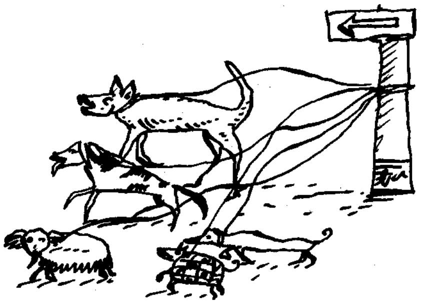
Although many Iranians have moved out to Orange County and the San Fernando Valley, those who live in Beverly Hills—where about a fifth of the population is Iranian—have come to embody the stereotype. Their American neighbors often see them as flashy and loud; other expatriate Iranians tend to regard them as caricatures—former royal ministers and other "Shahi" types who fled the revolution with bags of jewels, leaving their Tehran mansions and Caspian Sea villas in the care of servants. Their wives shop for designer clothes on Rodeo Drive; their children grow up to be, or to marry, doctors.

Of course, most L.A. Iranians were never ministers. Like Iranians anywhere, they are rich or poor, Muslim, Jewish, Baha'i, Christian, or Zoroastrian, secular or religious, conservative or leftist, highly educated or less so. But to some extent they are all élite. In Iran, they were not maids or shepherds but people who had enough sophistication and cash to get to America. Most are Shiite Muslims, but in West Los Angeles the Jewish Iranians are the most cohesive, connected through synagogues, marriages, and jobs. Few of L.A.'s mosques are Shiite, and, in any case, the last thing that most people fleeing the Islamic revolution wanted to see was a mosque. "If you're Jewish, you have American Jews," says Mehdi Bozorgmehr, a sociologist who has studied the community. "Being Muslim, Iranian, and secular is a potent negative baggage to carry. You're secular, so where do you go?" The community was outraged last December, when men from some Muslim countries were ordered to register with the Immigration and Naturalization Service and several hundred L.A. Iranians, including many Jews, were detained on visa violations. Most were eventually released, but in a rare show of unity thousands of Iranians marched down Wilshire Boulevard in protest. The thought that they had anything to do with Osama bin Laden was, to them, an absurdity.

Since his World Cup initiation into the society of Iranian exiles, Parshaw Dorriz has cemented his membership by attending family gatherings, Iranian concerts, and meetings of the Westlake High School Persian Club, of which he and his twin sister, Parastoo, became co-presidents this year. He has taken a Persian-history class at U.C.L.A. and gone on 3 A.M. excursions with his father to a kabob restaurant in the Valley to eat *halim*, a sort of cream-of-wheat-and-shredded-turkey breakfast served in mountain teahouses in Iran. But some Iranian flavors remain elusive, like *kharbozeh*, a sweet, white-fleshed Persian melon that is now grown on farms around L.A. Parshaw hates the taste of it, but when he starts to say, "Akh, *kharbozeh*," his father cuts in. "You don't know," he says. "In Iran they taste so much better." Parshaw is used to hearing this from older Iranians, for whom food has become the touchstone for more intangible longings. "They talk about it all the time," he says. "The lamb and the meat—how it was different because the lamb had all the fat on the tail."

Someday, Parshaw wants to be a doctor, and to volunteer his services in the poor regions of Iran. For now, he'd just like to see Shemiran, the tree-shaded north Tehran neighborhood where his parents grew up. Sometimes he calls there to talk to his twenty-eight-year-old cousin, Ario, whom he has never met. "The first time I talked to him, he was, like, 'Your Farsi's so good,'" Parshaw says shyly. "He said, 'Come on over, I'll take you everywhere,' which is exactly what I want."

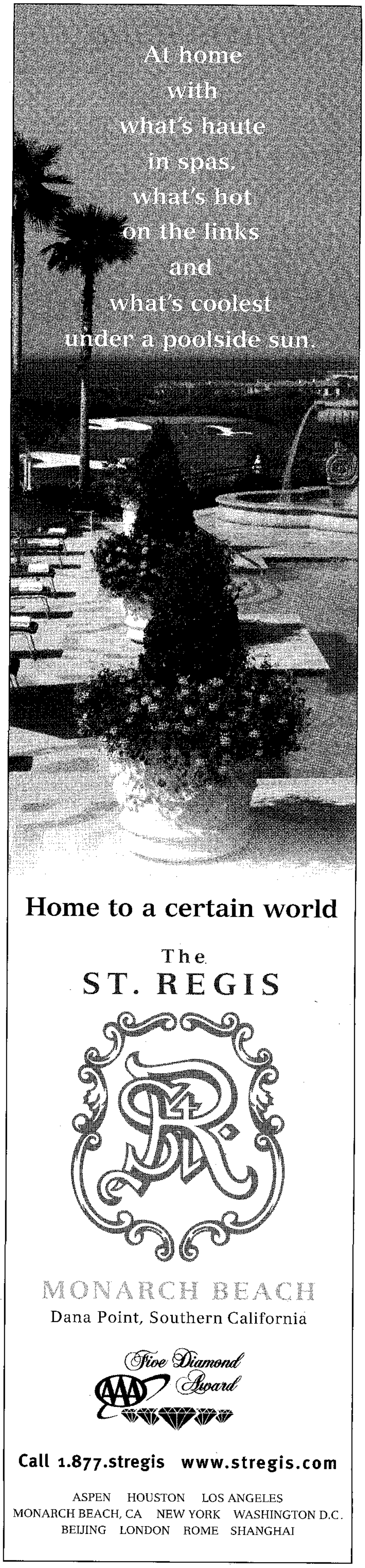
It is not what his parents want. They left Iran three decades ago and have never gone back. They opened their own businesses—Ali is a real-estate developer, Sholeh owns a beauty salon—and chose to bring up Parshaw and Parastoo far from revolution, war, and the strictures of Islam. They don't understand why Parshaw, an honors student and a basketball player with all the advantages of American life, would want to go to a country where he could be drafted, at a time when the U.S. government is murmuring about "regime change" there, a country that is a pariah not only to Americans but also to many of the Iranians who left it.



Unlike most exiles, Parshaw's family left Iran by design. In 1966, Ali, like many privileged young men—he was the oldest son of a wealthy Tehran businessman—went abroad to study, travelling around Canada and the United States before earning a civil-engineering degree and settling down in the Valley. Sholeh was the daughter of an art-school administrator and a schoolteacher in Shemiran. When she finished high school, suitors were already lined up for *khastegari*, a formal courtship that is still widely observed in Iran. She chose, instead, to continue her studies in America. In 1970, at the age of seventeen, she landed in Houston. She knew only three English phrases and was so homesick that she lost thirty pounds. Over time, she adjusted, and a few years later her parents moved to America, too.

When Sholeh and Ali arrived in the United States, the few Iranians living here were considered exotic and harmless. By the time they met, in the early eighties—he was a client at the bank where she worked—Iranian refugees were pouring in, shell-shocked and rootless. Although the community eventually coalesced, Sholeh and Ali never really joined the busy circuit of dinners and parties. "If you're not a doctor, if you're not a millionaire, if you don't have a Mercedes, if you don't go on ski trips, you're nobody," Sholeh says. When it comes to business, Ali says, he keeps his distance from other Iranians. "They never work a day in their life," he explains. "They're on government benefits. They say America owes them because it took their oil." (He is not alone in his disdain. Many L.A. Iranians complain about how Iranians cheat on their taxes, cut lines, and appropriate handicapped license plates for their cars. In the same breath, many admit to having their own handicapped plates.)

But in some ways the Dorrizes are



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"Quick, get it while its molecules are still vibrating."

very Iranian. Their house is filled with the Louis XIV-style furniture popular in Iran. They have antique chairs with cream-and-bronze striped upholstery, a silk Esfahani carpet, and an old-fashioned water pipe in their front window. Sholeh brought the children up on Persian food and demanded that they follow Persian etiquette. "I emphasized, 'Persians don't do this,' 'Persians don't do that,' 'When you're offered something, you talk with respect,' " she says. At the same time, she had no intention of inspiring her children to go to Iran. "I'm used to my freedom," she says. "A woman is not a piece of furniture here. I cannot go back now and live in a society where men rule."

In Parshaw's bedroom, under a poster of Tupac Shakur, is a copy of "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam." He says sheepishly that the book is perfect for someone like him, who has grown up knowing so little about his own religion. His religiosity isn't traditional—he sees "problems with the Shiites and problems with the Sunnis," so, like a picky diner at a buffet, he takes only what he likes from each side. He doesn't pray the requisite five times a day, and he doesn't believe in martyrdom, but whenever he runs out to school or to a friend's house he stops at the small table by the door to kiss the large family Koran.

This makes his mother uncomfortable. Five feet tall, with shaggy, wine-colored hair, Sholeh has dark, expressive eyes, and they often betray her fears for her son. "Parshaw has surprised me in so many ways," she told me as we sat together on the couch, cradling miniature glasses of hot tea. Religion has helped to make him a good kid, she says. He doesn't drink, he doesn't smoke, he doesn't run after girls; he doesn't cause her the same kind of anxiety as Parastoo, a striking girl who uses her American name, Sabrina, loves to go to parties, and chafes at not being allowed to date until she's eighteen. But Sholeh can understand Parastoo's desires. Parshaw's are more disconcerting to her. The last thing she wants, she says, is "a mullah on my hands." Last year at Ramadan, to her horror, Parshaw decided to fast for the entire month. "I said, 'I don't think that's a good idea. You play basketball and you run track.' I'm getting a little worried. He reads the Koran before he goes to bed. He wants to fast, and he doesn't touch pork. Believe me, I would like to get his DNA checked."

Ali and Sholeh often speak nostalgically about Iran, but their sentiments have nothing to do with Islam. When the family watched a movie that had been filmed recently in Tehran, Sholeh smiled and clucked her tongue fondly at shots of the snow-covered city. Ali recognized a type of door that his grandmother used to have—wooden, with separate iron knockers for men and women. Then, during a scene in which a mullah called people to prayer, Parshaw sat up. "You know that call of the muezzin?" he said. "It'll chill you to the bone. It gives me goosebumps, and I love that."

Sholeh put her head in her hands. When the film showed a group of high-school girls draped in black, she wrinkled her nose. "I don't want to see my country like this," she said.

"Like what?" Parshaw said testily.

"Those women in black chadors—it's like a herd of penguins walking."

Later, after Sholeh and Ali had gone to bed, Parshaw and I watched the characters in the film stop to light a candle at a tiny shrine built into the side of a building. Parshaw looked pained. "Did you see that?" he asked. "For me, it's such an uphill battle just to get my parents to allow me to go to mosque. They think all the radical ideas come from the mosque. But these people, they're going home, and on the way home they stop at a shrine, which I'm sure they don't even think twice about."

Parshaw has tangible objects that link him to Iran. In his bedroom, alongside his CDs of Jay-Z, Ja Rule, Marvin Gaye, and Louis Armstrong, are CDs of Iranian singers. On his bulletin board is an official photograph of the Iranian soccer team; a hand-drawn map of Iran; a picture of Googoosh, the pop diva of seventies Iran who was silenced by the Islamic regime; a flyer from his high-school Persian Club's Kabob Day. He has a photo album filled with outdated Iranian paper currency, and a twenty-rial coin with the Shah's profile, which Ali found when he knocked down the kitchen wall a couple of years ago. (It must have been built in by the former owners, who were also Iranian.) "I wouldn't spend that if you paid me," Parshaw said, placing it in my hand.

As I held the coin that I had once used to buy ice-cream cones, I felt a pang. Growing up in America after the revolution, I, too, had hoarded treasures from Iran. The items I carried onto the plane in the final week of the Shah's reign—my class notebook with its half-finished assignments, my school T-shirt, an amber-colored hand-shaped pendant that my aunt had pressed into my palm on the morning we left—were, as I saw it, the only objects that remained from my old life. The rest of my childhood was gone.

But it was hard to fathom how Parshaw, who had never been to Iran, could feel the same way. It was as if, after five years of obsession, Iran and the absence of Iran had become so tightly wound into his being that he had, in a sense, turned himself into an exile. Above his bed was a homemade poster that included both the Islamic Republic's Allah symbol and the Shah's lion and sun. To anyone who ever lived in Iran—pre- or post-revolution—this would be jarring, like seeing Castro and Batista on the same T-shirt. Also on the wall was a Shah-era Iranian flag. "That's my flag, my prize flag," Parshaw said. "It gives such a sense of strength." He sighed like a man who has seen and lost it all. "*Chi boodim . . . chi shodim*," he murmured. "What we were . . . what we became."

Iranians in the United States and Europe are often compared with Miami Cubans and exiled White Russians—not immigrants fleeing poverty or pogroms but élites wrenched from a life of privilege into a shadow existence that will never live up to the charmed world they remember. Like the Miami Cubans, L.A.'s Iranian exiles tend to be Republicans. Many blame Jimmy Carter for the revolution, saying that the Shah was soft on the revolutionaries because Carter was pressuring him to improve human rights. They were outraged last year when Carter won the Nobel Peace Prize. (This year, however, the community rejoiced when the prize went to Shirin Ebadi, an outspoken human-rights lawyer in Iran.) When President Bush named Iran a member of "the axis of evil," many cheered, and when he declared war with Iraq some hoped that he would bomb Iran, too.

In the eighties, Iran's government, like those of Cuba and the U.S.S.R., arrested, tortured, and executed suspected dissidents and blocked much foreign travel. Most expatriates were either too worried that their names were on blacklists or too ideologically opposed to the government to consider a trip home. But after Khomeini died, in 1989, return gradually became easier for all but the most vocal opponents of the regime. Passports that once cost a thousand dollars and took months to process now cost less than a hundred and arrive within weeks.

Some Iranians still refuse, on principle, to go back. Some, like a school friend of mine who came to America when I did, can't bring themselves to go for fear of disillusionment. Others simply have no interest. I met a trim, bronze-haired Beverly Hills real-estate agent in her fifties, who grew up in Iran at a time when women were expected to be only wives and mothers. Here, she socializes with prominent Iranian academics, psychologists, and journalists. "L.A., to Iranians, is like the Kaaba, like Mecca," she marvelled. "It's our second homeland." But Iranian men her age have been less ready to embrace American culture. "One of the grudges my husband is holding against me is that I brought him here," she said. "He only reads Iranian magazines, he only watches Iranian TV. He

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had a much better life in Iran. His passion is teaching, and he lost that here. For him, life in L.A. isn't that promising."

Her story reminded me of Andre Dubus III's novel "House of Sand and Fog," in which a former Iranian colonel puts on a suit every morning and then changes clothes on the way to his job as a trash collector on a California highway. For all the successful Iranian entrepreneurs, there are also men of a certain age who, paralyzed by the loss of their former status, came here and refused to learn English or to get driver's licenses. Often, their wives took up the slack, going to school and launching careers of their own. I have met no women older than fifty who want to go back to Iran, but I spoke with many men who longed for home. A Beverly Hills schoolteacher told me that her father, a wealthy insurance agent with an elegant condominium in Brentwood, dreams of spending his final days in a shack on the Caspian Sea. Even a man I met whose brother and friend were executed after the revolution for their leftist political beliefs still wanted to go back. "I look at life like a *ghezel-ala*," he told me. "What is this fish? Born in the river and then goes to the sea and then comes back and dies in the river."

But even today, after thousands of Iranians have returned to Iran without incident, a scrim of fear still covers those who haven't made the trip. Last year, L.A. Iranians were shaken when a well-known dance teacher with U.S. citizenship went back after a twenty-year absence to see his sick father and was arrested for corrupting the youth of Iran with his videos; he was barred from leaving Iran for ten years (though he was later allowed out). Parshaw's parents have horror stories of their own. "Sholeh's brother went back, they gave him a rosy picture," Ali says. "Then he ended up having to flee. They found a picture of him in the Shah's time with a right-hand man of the Shah. Another guy went back to bury his mother. When he wanted to leave, they made him pay ten thousand dollars. How can you trust people like that?" An Iranian travel agent told me about two friends who recently returned for the first time: "One came back, and he said, '*Khoda*, how much fun it was. People are bullshitting when they say Iran is bad. Every night we had parties, opium from here to there, vodka, girls who will do anything to come to America.' Two days later, his friend calls me and says, 'I will never go back. There is so much sadness, so much poverty. These people I was staying with had to get up at five in the morning to buy bread to give these parties.' "

Those who were adolescents at the time of the revolution feel perhaps the greatest ambivalence about where home is. Ali Behdad, a forty-two-year-old professor of English at U.C.L.A., sees himself as part of a lost generation, too young to have had an independent life in Iran but too old to feel completely at home in America. Iranians his age have trouble sustaining relationships, he says; he has been divorced three times, and recently married again. Between his marriages, his family in Iran offered to find him a beautiful wife if he would only come home. "But, especially for someone like me, who is trained in post-structuralism, feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, you can't go back," he says. "As they say in Iran, I'm a stick that's been dirtied on both ends—rotten on one side, forgotten on the other." Still, he adds, "there is a place I can go when I get homesick: I can go to Irangeles."

Through all the years of official silence between their two countries, Iranians in Los Angeles and Tehran have keenly watched one another from afar. In the late nineties, exiles in L.A. started beaming satellite-TV programs to Iran. This past June, when students in Iran held demonstrations against the Islamic government, the satellite stations tried to stage their own virtual-reality revolution, taking calls from Iranians who reported on the street battles, and exhorting viewers in Iran to go out and protest against the clerics. Mostly, though, the stations, which are also widely watched in L.A., broadcast ads, music videos, and talk shows featuring celebrity doctors. Young women call in to ask the TV plastic surgeon if they should get breast implants. Parents ask Dr. Holakouee, a psychologist who has a local radio show, how to handle their pot-smoking adolescents. "It's still a primitive culture," said Payam Farrahi, who hosts a radio show with his father. "There's still a concept of calling the head of the village to solve your problems."

The owners of the stations generally disclaim political affiliations, and their aesthetics are often dated—marked by layered blow-dried hair, tight pants, pointy shoes, and wide lapels that survive among older Iranians in L.A. long after they have gone out of style both in the United States and in Tehran. (Young Tehranis take their cues from MTV, not from the aging newscasters of stations like Pars TV or NITV.) The outdated styles seem to reflect a deeper inertia among the exiles—an inability to move beyond the political and social mind-set of the Shah era. To Mehdi, a thick-bearded man who works at one of the bookstores in Westwood, the Iranian community's pining for the past is misguided. "They have no idea what is happening in Iran," he told me. "It's been twenty years, and nobody takes responsibility for what happened in Iran. We don't accept our dark side." Fariborz Davoodian, a forty-four-year-old Hollywood producer and actor with a shaved head and stylish black jeans, told me, "I've read somewhere that this is typical—the home country moves forward, but migrant groups don't."

Although Sholeh Dorriz assiduously heeds Dr. Holakouee's advice, she worries about the effect that the stations' nostalgia may have on her children. For a teen-age boy accustomed to the American media's dour images of Iran, the exile programs can be alluring. "They say, 'Iranians are this, they are that, they are the most educated immigrant. They have this kind of doctor, that kind of doctor.' My kids hear that there's no crime among us, that we have a good culture, a good backbone. It's constantly brainwashing the people about how good we are." Sholeh's friend Azita, a blond, well-manicured woman who lives a few blocks away from the Dorrizes, admits that she has painted a similarly romantic picture for her son, Daniel. "He says to me, 'Oh my God, you had a perfect childhood,' and I say, 'Yeah, I did,' " she says. "But now you can be arrested for listening to foreign music. I mean, I don't think my children can comprehend this. I don't think Daniel could ever comprehend that he can't wear shorts going down the street."

At Westlake High School, a clutch of low stucco structures set into a sheared-off hill, the parking lot is lined with shiny Jettas, Audis, BMWs, and one enormous black Cadillac S.U.V. with twenty-three-inch reverse-spinning

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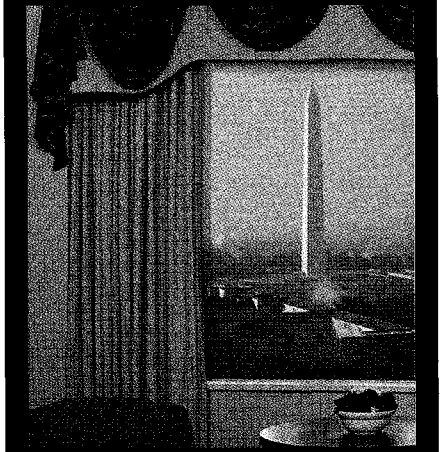

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rims, which, Parshaw tells me, in a hushed voice, cost five thousand dollars apiece. On the school grounds, tanned girls in tight jeans and Guess T-shirts talk on cell phones as they walk past oak trees and rosebushes. Boys in baggy shorts eat onion rings and cookies. Many are Iranian. A sign above the administration office announces that the school is a National Top 100 School. There is a rumor among the students that Heather Locklear was once enrolled here, and although the school has no record of her ever attending, the mere idea of it would thrill many boys in Iran. It does not thrill Parshaw and Daniel. Hanging out in Daniel's room after school, the boys study a National Geographic map of the world pinned above the desk, something that they say would hold little interest for most of their classmates.

"We're the political ones," Parshaw says.

"Most kids are so stupid," adds Daniel, a sturdy kid with a dark-blond brush of hair, pale skin, and red cheeks. Only his dark eyebrows hint at his mother's Iranian roots. (His father is American.) "They think Westlake is it, like the rest of the world is so far away."

"I know this sounds kind of bad, but we don't have any American friends," Parshaw says. Parshaw and Daniel are, of course, American, and so are their friends, though many have parents who come from other countries. But the boys identify with Iran, an anachronistic Iran that has more to do with their grandparents' generation than with their own. Parshaw imagines Tehran in black-and-white, as it is in his parents' old pictures. When Sholeh's father, who is ninety-four and lives in Torrance, near the Los Angeles airport, comes for dinner, Parshaw drapes his long arm around the old man's narrow shoulders and tries to memorize the Persian poetry that his grandfather carefully writes out in a shaky calligraphy. Daniel imagines Iran with nineteen-fifties-era cars, and dreams of hunting leopards with his grandfather. Those images of Iranian life are more meaningful to the boys than their encounters with the Iranian kids in the Valley who get tattoos that say "Allah" and pick fights with Iranian Jews.

Instead of a tattoo, Parshaw has a screen name, ParSHAofIRAN, which he uses to chat with other Iranian teenagers and trade "You know you're Iranian if . . ." lists. (He is delighted to find entries that apply to him, such as "You drive a black Lexus, Mercedes, or BMW," "You rewind the movie 'Clueless' to show your friends the Persian Mafia part," "You have a hookah as a centerpiece in your living room," and "You actually like carbonated yogurt drinks.") He also has a hidden mark. "I don't show this to many people," he said softly, pulling off his heavy gold Westlake High School class ring and dropping it into my hand. On the inside, inscribed in a delicate cursive, were the words "Allah Akbar. I am Iran's youth."

When I was at the Dorriz house, Parshaw showed me a thick stack of papers lying beside the family TV: copies of his parents' expired Empire of Iran passports and blank applications for new Islamic Republic ones. The forms had been there for months, though Parshaw said that it would take only half an hour to fill them out. A few weeks ago, Sholeh said, she finally mailed them off, "simply because he drove me crazy." Parshaw is ecstatic, but Sholeh is still hoping that he'll outgrow his obsession with Iran. It is perhaps more likely that over the years Iran will grow closer to Parshaw. The real youth of Iran—the young people living there now—make up more than half of the country's population; as they come of age, they will gain leverage against the Islamic rule imposed by the older clerics. How Iran will change remains to be seen, but chances are it will become, in certain ways, more like L.A.

L.A., on the other hand, is probably as Iranian as it will ever get. In coming generations, many of the Iranians there will assimilate. Some will move back to Iran. Among those will be people like the middle-aged man in his Brentwood condo, dreaming of a beachside shack, and people, like Parshaw, whose inherited nostalgia is strong enough to pull them across the world. Once that happens, there may come a day when a child in Iran, listening to his American-born parents' tales of lemon trees and veggie burritos, will close his eyes, let out a wistful sigh, and claim Los Angeles as his own lost home. ♦

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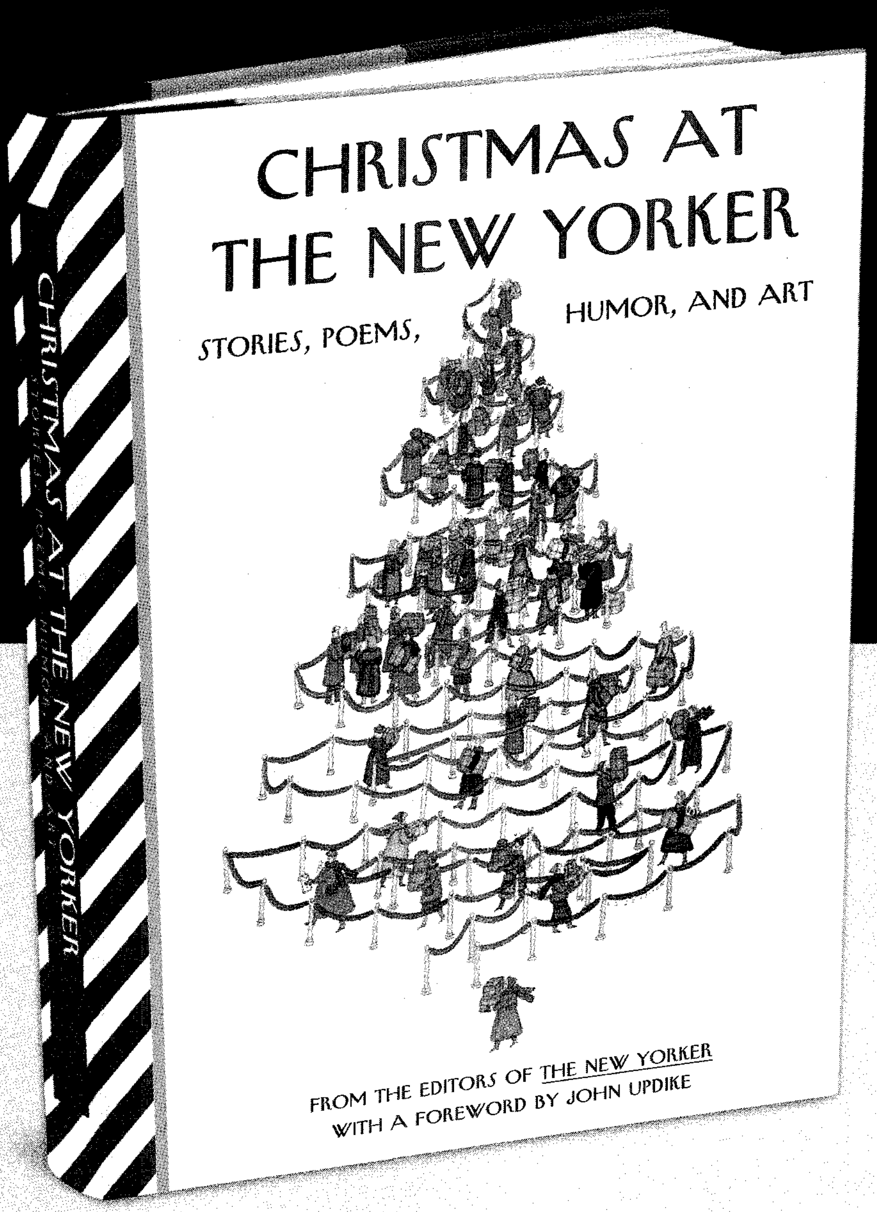
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CONCRETE JUNGLE

Giant wrecking balls, Mob contracts, and the cement that holds the city together.

BY DAVID OWEN

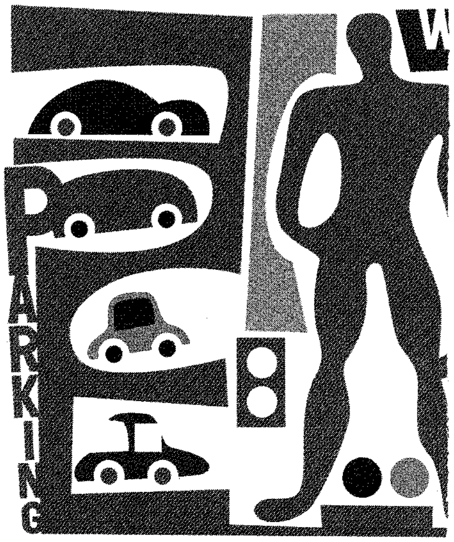
Some friends of mine—former New Yorkers who had moved to the country—bought a Labrador-retriever puppy. When the dog was six months old, they took her with them on a weekend visit to Manhattan. The dog adored New York's pungent sidewalks, but she hadn't relieved herself since leaving home, and my friends began to worry that she was ill.

The following morning, the dog was almost standing on tiptoe, and my friends suddenly guessed her problem: she had been housebroken in the fieldlike yard behind their place in the country, and to her Manhattan didn't look like outside. Concrete was a form of flooring, as far as she could tell; the pale trees poking through SoHo's sidewalks were more like houseplants than like woods. My friends grabbed her leash and rushed her to Washington Square Park.

Two hundred years ago, a pet with a superego would have had no problem with Manhattan, because it was still mostly forest and field. Metropolitan civilization, such as it was, confined itself to the island's southern tip. A broad salt marsh lay where the East Village lies today. Murray Hill and Lenox Hill were hills. Harlem was a bucolic outpost on a plain flanked by sylvan bluffs.

During the decades that followed, Manhattan's builders levelled the hills, filled the valleys, buried the streams, and imposed an unyielding, two-dimensional grid of avenues and streets. When that grid was conceived, in the early eighteen-hundreds, money entered and left the city by way of the rivers on either side, so the cross streets were laid out close together, to provide maximum access to the piers. The tight spacing left little room for yards or gardens or parks, and, as new buildings rose and multiplied, the sky withdrew. Pavement smothered earth. Soaring rooftops defined a sort of alternate topography, while foundations, sewers, and tunnels gnawed the landscape from below. The old contours receded into the mantle of habitation, and New York became an island of concrete.

Quite a bit of that concrete is plainly visible—in sidewalks, subway platforms, parking garages, bridge abutments, the all-concrete thoroughfares of Sixth Avenue and the West Side Highway, the spiralling shell of the Guggenheim Museum—but much more of it lies beneath the city's surface. On most of Manhattan's streets, asphalt is mainly a veneer applied to a thick, underlying base of concrete. The subfloors of most apartments, offices, and stores are made of concrete, or partly of concrete. The ongoing construction of the Third Water Tunnel, the most ambitious and expensive public-works project in the city's history, has consumed several million tons of concrete since the digging began, in 1970, and will consume many thousand more tons by the time the last of the ancillary branches has been completed, in 2020 or so.



Every load of concrete is made according t

Of all the catalysts of human progress, concrete may be the least prepossessing. If you reckon significance by cumulative mass, however, you could argue that concrete belongs at the top of the list: it's the most widely used man-made building material, and without it modern life would be inconceivable. Concrete is more than just an element of New York's impermeable carapace; it's the matrix that holds the city together.

Contrary to popular usage, "concrete" and "cement" are not synonyms. Sidewalks and foundations are made of concrete, not of cement, although cement is concrete's most important ingredient. The other ingredients are gravel or crushed stone, sand, water, and, optionally, various performance-enhancing additives. The vehicles that most people call cement mixers are actually concrete mixers; cement, like talcum powder, is transported mainly in tank trucks.

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housands of specific recipes. "People think that concrete is very fungible, and one size fits all," a producer said. "But it's not."

LAURIE ROSENWALD

The cement in concrete is called portland cement, because Joseph Aspdin, an English bricklayer who is credited with the invention of its earliest version, felt that its color was similar to that of limestone quarried on the Isle of Portland, a peninsula on England's southern coast. Aspdin received his cement patent in 1824. His process involved heating limestone and clay in a kiln until parts of the mixture fused, then grinding the burned and desiccated result into a fine powder. Adding water to the powder yielded a workable paste and initiated a complex chemical process, called hydration, in which the water bonded with compounds of calcium, silicon, aluminum, and iron, and caused the whole thing to lock together in a rigid mass. Wet portland cement doesn't merely "dry," the way mud does; hydration transforms it into a chemically distinct material, which continues to gain *strength indefinitely.*

Used by itself, portland cement would be a poor building material, because it shrinks considerably as it hardens, and as it shrinks it cracks; a sidewalk made solely of cement wouldn't last very long. (Concrete shrinks and cracks, too, but not as much.) In concrete, the function of cement is to fill voids between pieces of fine aggregate (the sand) and pieces of coarse aggregate (the crushed stone or gravel) and glue everything together. The result is a conglomerate-like artificial rock, which before it sets can be poured, pumped, spread, molded, shaped, reinforced, and manipulated in ways that no natural building material can, and yet is so inexpensive to fabricate that you can have it delivered to you fresh in midtown for about two cents a pound.

One of the metropolitan area's earliest and most outspoken concrete evangelists was Thomas Edison, who built a colossal portland-cement mill in New Village, New Jersey, in 1899, and whose lifetime list of a thousand and ninety-three United States patents includes forty-nine related directly to cement or concrete. For a few years in the early nineteen-hundreds, his company circulated a monthly brochure called *The Edison Aggregate*, and in 1926 it published an effusively hortatory promotional book called "The Romance of Cement" (first chapter: "The Eternal Romance of Cement"). Edison cement was used to make concrete for the original Yankee Stadium, for parts of New York City's water-supply system, and for an attractive apartment building still standing at 173-5 Riverside Drive, among many other projects. Edison also tried, though unsuccessfully, to interest the world in concrete pianos, concrete phonograph cabinets, and concrete bedroom furniture, and he devised a system that was supposed to enable builders to cast an entire two-story concrete dwelling, including the fireplace and some of the bathroom fixtures, in a single continuous pour. The system didn't work quite as advertised, although several dozen Edison concrete houses were actually built. Not long ago, I spoke by telephone with Barb and Bill Bowling, who have lived in an Edison house in Newark, Ohio, for more than thirty years. They told me that they love their concrete home, which has two stories and four bedrooms, and that one of its few real drawbacks is that you can't drive nails into the walls.

The concrete that Edison used in his houses could probably withstand compressive loads of around three thousand pounds per square inch—more or less the same as the concrete used to make Manhattan sidewalks today, and the industry standard for most of concrete's history. In recent decades, though, engineers have figured out how to make concrete that is many times as strong. They have also learned how to manipulate concrete in remarkable ways. For example, there's an ultra-lightweight version called autoclaved aerated concrete, which contains no coarse aggregates, is eighty per cent air, and, in some applications, can be used to make walls that require no additional insulation.

My brain is about eighty per cent air, too, so I went to see Christian Meyer, a professor of civil engineering at Columbia University and the author of a slab-size textbook called "Design of Concrete Structures." Meyer operates a large laboratory on the ground floor of Columbia's engineering building, where he and his students experiment with things like making concrete out of toxic sludge dredged from the bottom of New York Harbor, and trying to reinforce thin concrete panels with taut strands of Kevlar (the stuff in bulletproof vests).

"In the past twenty years or so, concrete has become a material that we can engineer like any other," Meyer told me. "If you tell me what properties you want concrete to have, we can engineer it for you. If you need great compressive strength, for example, we can now make a type of concrete called reactive-powder concrete, which can reach strengths of thirty thousand or forty thousand pounds per square inch, or nearly the strength of ordinary steel."

Reactive-powder concrete is a highly specialized product, but even regular concrete can be manipulated in a multitude of ways. Compressive strength can be greatly increased through the introduction of additional cementitious materials (such as fly ash, blast-furnace slag, silica flume, volcanic ash, and diatomaceous earth), or by adding substances that facilitate hydration. There are chemicals called accelerators to make concrete get stronger faster, retarders to delay hardening, and superplasticizers to make concrete flow more readily, so that it can be pumped to the upper floors of a high-rise, say, or spread into complicated forms, without requiring the addition of more water—an important consideration, because excessive water delays setting, causes heavier aggregates to settle out, and makes finished concrete weaker.

Though concrete is very hard to crush, it's relatively easy to pull apart. The usual way to compensate for this tensile weakness is to add steel reinforcing rods, known as rebar, which take over when the concrete cracks. Concrete reinforced with rebar must crack, Meyer explained. "That may sound funny to the layperson," he said, "but the reason is that if it doesn't crack, you didn't need the steel. It is the challenge of the engineer to keep the cracks small, so that rather than having a few big cracks we have many little cracks."

One area of continuing interest, Meyer told me, involves adding short lengths of threadlike fibres made of steel, polypropylene, polyolefin, and other materials—samples of which he sprinkled into my hands. Polypropylene, it turns out, can also be used to provide extra fire protection. Concrete is essentially fireproof, but it can fail in very high temperatures as free water trapped inside it turns to steam, expands, and blows it apart from within; adding polypropylene fibres can reduce the risk of such failures, because in high heat the fibres melt, leaving voids that act like relief valves for steam. Such concrete can provide extra protection in structures that may be exposed to any of a variety of increasingly ordinary-seeming perils of modern existence, among them fires, explosions, and bomb blasts.

Wet concrete can't be shipped very far. A standard batch must be placed—that's the preferred term, rather than "poured"—within about ninety minutes of the moment when water is first added to it, or the mix will begin to harden inside the barrel of the truck. All the ready-mixed concrete used in Manhattan, therefore, originates nearby, at plants in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx.

I wanted to watch concrete being made, and a number of people I talked to, including Christian Meyer, had mentioned a local producer, Ferrara Bros. Building Materials, as being notably up to date. Ferrara Bros. was founded in 1969, when Jerome Ferrara and his five sons—the brothers—agreed to buy a modest concrete plant and masonry-supply yard from a neighbor. The deal included equipment for making concrete but no trucks for delivering it, so the five brothers tracked down five twenty-year-old Autocar mixers, the only trucks they could afford, and travelled to Massachusetts to pick them up. On the company's first official day of business, the driver of one of the trucks turned sharply to avoid a car, and flipped the truck on its side. (The torque of a turning mixer barrel makes a concrete truck, which is top-heavy to begin with, especially hard to handle on corners.) No one was hurt, but the accident reduced the Ferraras' fleet by twenty per cent just as their first deliveries were being made.

Joseph J. Ferrara—who is a son of the eldest of the five brothers, and is now a vice-president of the company and its general counsel—remembers that accident well. "I was eleven years old and walking home from baseball practice," he told me. "I saw a big crowd and a crane

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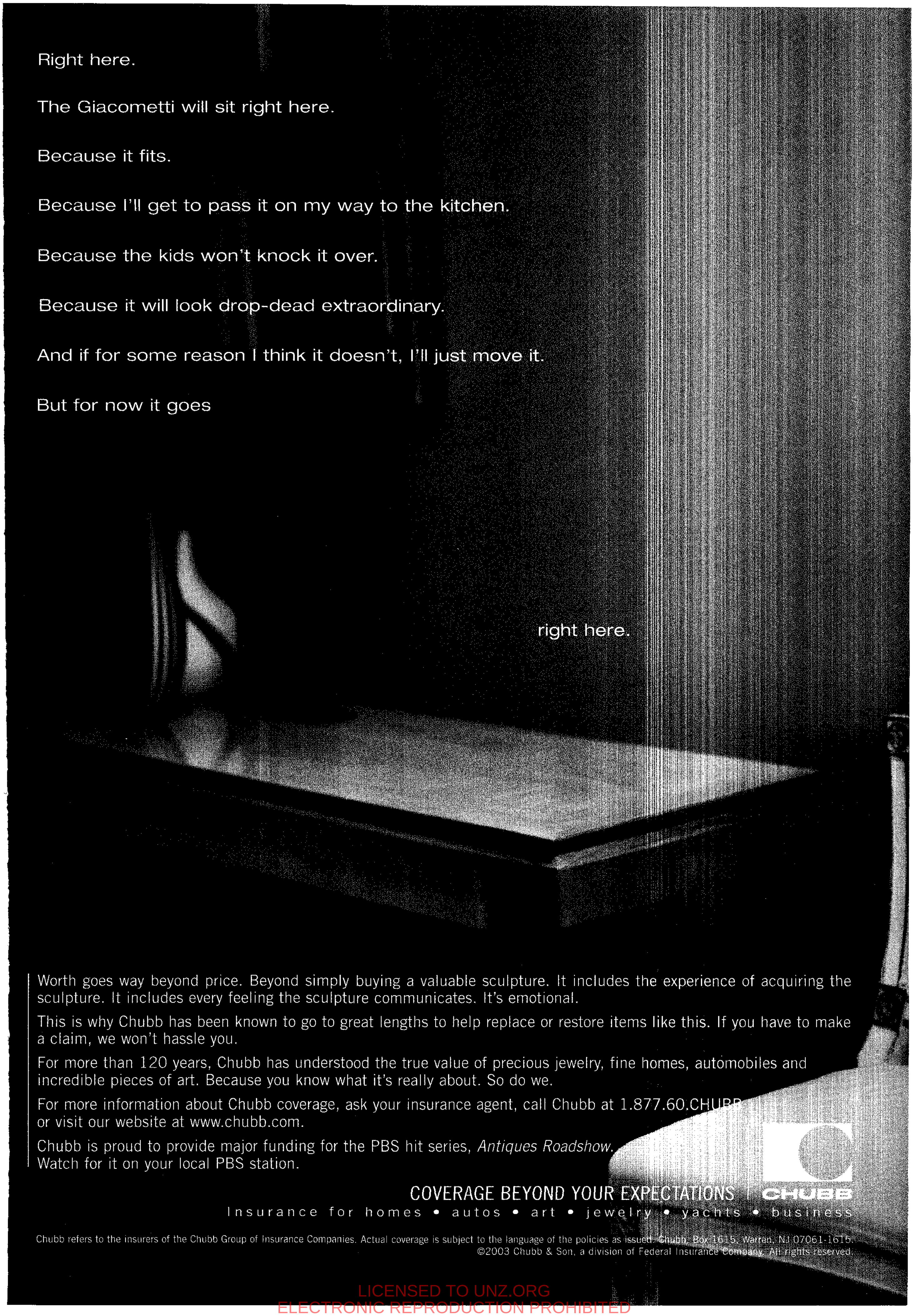

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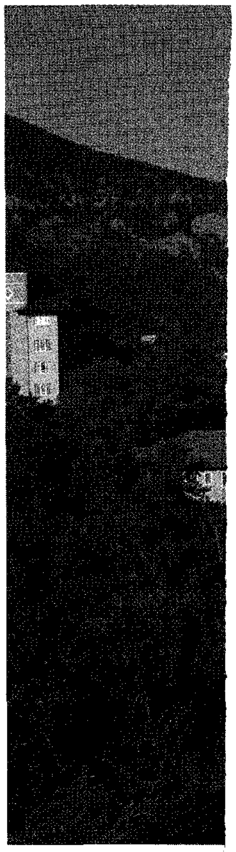
BY NAO HAUSER

For hotels it's like winning an Oscar. The Mobil Five-Star Award, granted to only thirty of the twelve-and-a-half-thousand properties in the "Mobil Travel Guide" series, means reaching the pinnacle—not just a beautiful facility with a gracious ambience but also flawless service. For discerning travellers the award signifies a pact: When you arrive here, you will be well taken care of.

The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, which opened in 1918, has won Mobil Five Stars every year since 1960 (the year "Mobil Travel Guide" inaugurated the fifth star), for an astonishing run of forty-four years. Broadmoor president and CEO Steve Bartolin renews the legacy daily. "The first thing I do every morning," he says, "is read and respond personally to every guest's comment, because the Mobil Five Stars are all about service, about our relationship with our guests." He adds, "I've never had a guest say: 'That's the most beautiful chandelier in the lobby—can't wait to get back.' What they say is: 'Every employee I passed greeted me by name. That's what made it special.' "



Images courtesy of *top:* © The Broadmoor; bottom: © Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts

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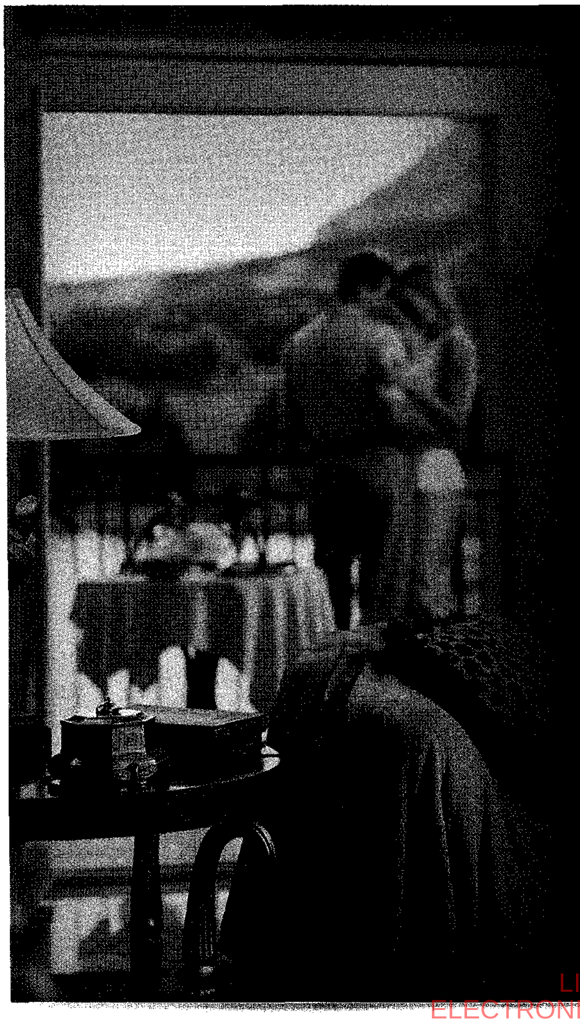

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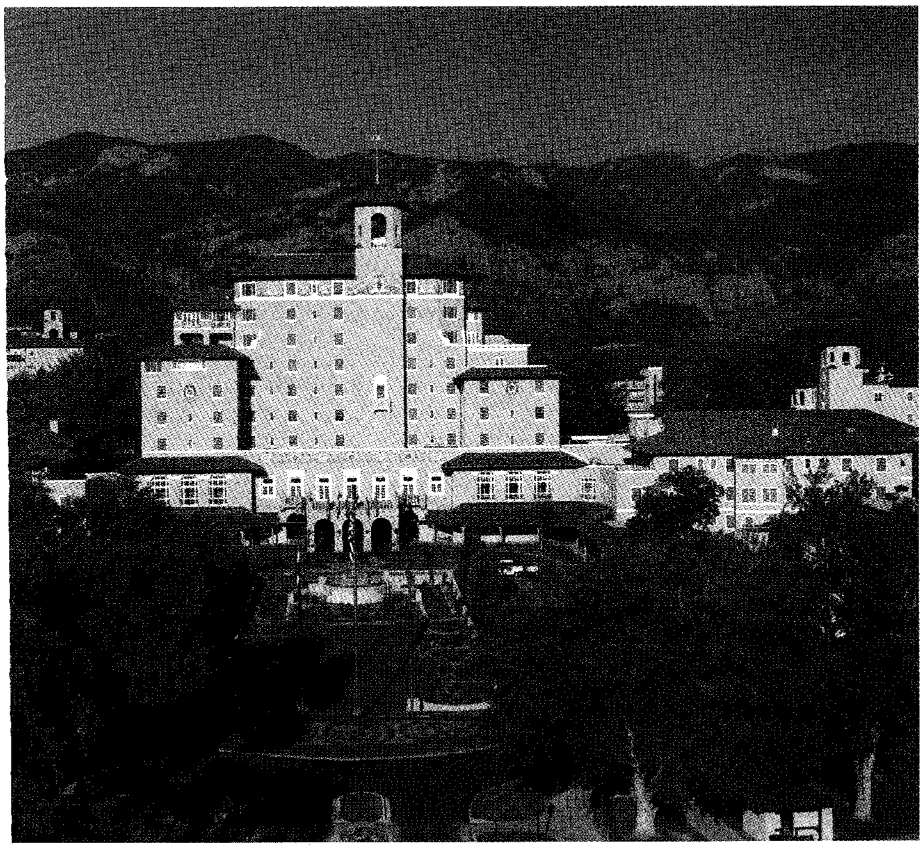
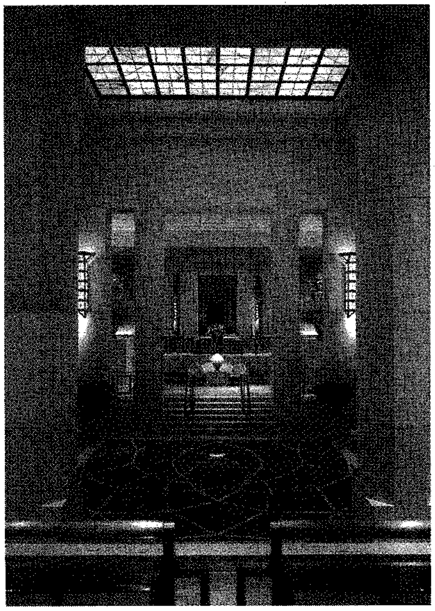




The Brightest Stars
Clockwise: The Broadmoor has won more Mobil Five Stars than anywhere else. This year, Four Seasons dominates the hotel category: their Aujourd'hui restaurant in Boston; the lobby of The Four Seasons Hotel New York.

Bartolin's three-thousand-acre resort in the Rockies offers everything from three championship golf courses, tennis, horseback riding, painting lessons given by a resident artist, as well as a spa. Hikes through Cheyenne Canyon with a llama (to carry your lunch) are also available. The challenge, he says, is "to offer the same warm welcome and the same personalized service throughout." There is a staff of sixteen hundred people (a high ratio, considering the resort's seven hundred rooms), all of whom receive detailed and comprehensive training that includes eighty-four courses and classes. There is also a three-year culinary apprenticeship program at the resort's nine restaurants. "But you have to realize that we're not an

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Last week, Mobil Travel Guide president Larry Dustin announced the 2004 Five-Star Award winners.
(Each number indicated is the total number of non-consecutive years a hotel or resort has won Mobil Five Stars.)

HOTELS

The Beverly Hills Hotel (9)
The Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta (5)
The Four Seasons Hotel Boston (5)
The Four Seasons Hotel Chicago (9)
The Four Seasons Hotel New York (9)
The Four Seasons Hotel San Francisco (2)
Hotel Bel-Air, Los Angeles (12)
The Jefferson, Richmond (4)
The Mansion on Turtle Creek, Dallas (15)
The Peninsula Beverly Hills (11)
The Peninsula Chicago (2)
Raffles L'Ermitage Beverly Hills (5)
The Ritz-Carlton, Chicago (A Four Seasons Hotel) (2)
The Ritz-Carlton New York, Central Park (1)
The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco (8)
The St. Regis, New York (9)

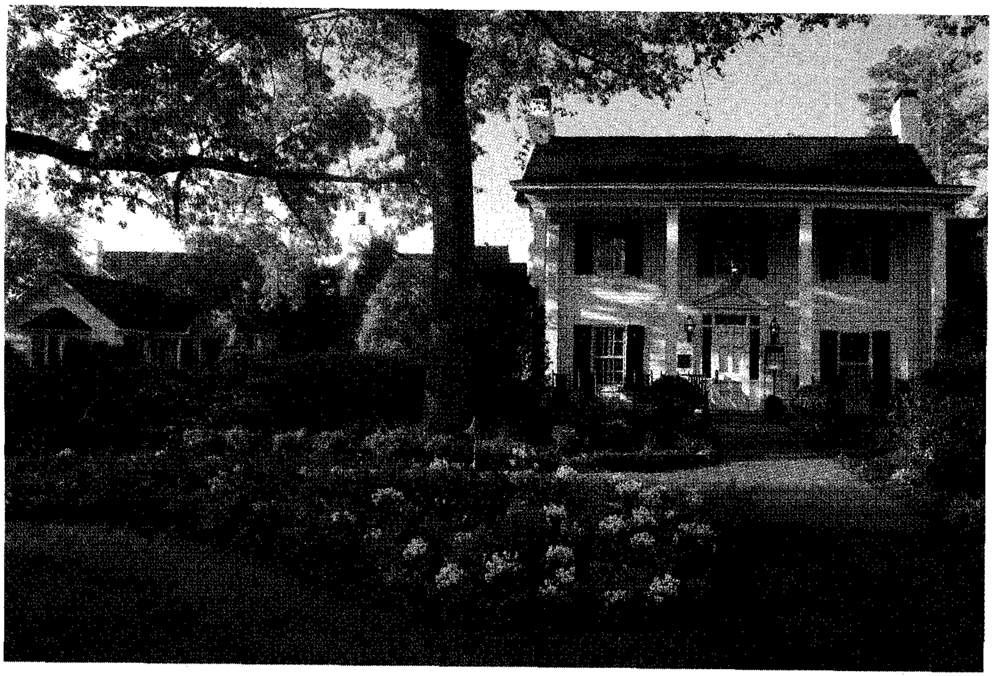
RESORTS

The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs (44)
The Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach (6)
The Little Nell, Aspen (9)
Lodge at Sea Island, St. Simons Island (2)
The Ritz-Carlton, Naples (16)
The Ritz-Carlton, Palm Beach (2)

INNS

Blantyre, Lenox, MA (2)
Château du Sureau, Oakhurst, CA (8)
The Fearrington House, Pittsboro, NC (5)
The Inn at Little Washington, Washington, VA (16)
The Mayflower Inn, Washington, CT (9)
The Point, Saranac Lake, NY (7)
Twin Farms, Barnard, VT (9)
Woodlands Resort & Inn, Summerville, SC (1)

For more information on "Mobil Travel Guide," visit www.mobiltravelguide.com.



Stars of All Sizes
Above: The Fearrington House in Pittsboro, North Carolina offers serenity among English gardens and rolling farmland. *Right:* Richmond's The Jefferson has been restored to its eighteen-nineties elegance.

Images courtesy of *top:* © Fearrington Village; *right:* © The Jefferson

urban hotel," Bartolin points out. "Here, service includes hand-mowing the golf greens and hand-raking the bunkers."

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts has also set a Mobil Five-Star record, with its properties altogether holding seven of the thirty awards. Six of them are urban oases—in Boston, New York, Atlanta, Chicago (two), and San Francisco. The seventh is the dreamy oceanfront resort at Palm Beach. All are cherished by guests for settings that couldn't be more different from The Broadmoor's. **The Four Seasons Hotel Boston**, for example, overlooks the Public Garden, located amid the old-fashioned charm of the Back Bay. **The Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta** has a unique place in the community both for its Midtown location (steps from the Woodruff Arts Center and the High Museum of Art) and for the weddings, anniversaries, and birthdays Atlantans celebrate there. The two hotels in Chicago are only a few blocks apart along the Magnificent Mile, yet they provide a distinct choice of atmosphere: **The Four Seasons Hotel Chicago** is newer, brighter, and more European in style and furnishings; **The Ritz-Carlton, Chicago** (A Four Seasons Hotel) is an aerie above Water Tower Place with an award-winning contemporary French restaurant. **The Four Seasons Hotel San Francisco** opened in 2001 and won Mobil Five Stars the same year.

What these hotels share with each other and with The Broadmoor is a service mentality. "The Four Seasons culture is service," emphasizes Wolf Hengst, president in charge of hotel operations worldwide. "What the Mobil Five-Star Award recognizes is the passion and commitment of our employees." The company's most important policy, Hengst believes, is treating service as a career worthy of pride and ambition.

The aim of the training that every employee receives is consistency—to ensure that every one of the estimated five thousand daily encounters between staff and guests in an average hotel is friendly and courteous. The basic program addresses 260 measurable standards, such as the time it takes room service (offered 24/7 at Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts) to answer the phone and the fastidiousness of the overnight laundry. But Hengst recognizes that you have to be endowed with a certain kind of personality to want to get every detail right. "Our general managers, especially, have to be kind of neurotic, obsessive-compulsive," he says.

Stan Bromley, general manager of The Four Seasons Hotel San Francisco, agrees. "That's why I love my work—it suits me. I live with constant fear and guilt, but I don't think you can ever care too much." The caring includes learning guests' individual preferences

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so that they can be anticipated—like a cappuccino after your massage, for example. But it starts with hiring nice people, Bromley says, "because if your eyes don't smile, we can't teach you that."

At **The Four Seasons Hotel New York**, a magnificent I. M. Pei-designed tower that opened in 1993, general manager Thomas Steinhauer is constantly asking, "How do you turn this stunning structure into a warm and embracing environment?" He has found that the answer has to keep changing in order to address guest's needs and desires. So he recently buttressed the spa with nine treatment rooms that are equipped to deliver simultaneous services—such as a manicure and inner pulse-light therapy. But his daily conversations with guests also revealed that while they want complete relaxation, they only had an hour or two to achieve it. And he has also been thinking a lot about kids' needs, as more and more of his guests bring their families.

Among Mobil Five-Star winners, **The Jefferson** in Richmond, Virginia stands out for its story of historic redemption. The Beaux-Arts grande dame, opened in 1895, was designed by Carrère & Hastings of New York Public Library fame. It featured electric lights and elevators along with its décor of priceless antiques. Stanford White threw a famous party in the roof garden for Charles Dana Gibson and his "Gibson Girl" fiancée. But severe fires in 1901 and 1944 precipitated the hotel's decline and its closing in 1980; Louis Malle used the shuttered building as the set for "My Dinner with Andre." Then, after massive restoration and renovation, The Jefferson rose again, achieving Mobil Five-Star status in 2001.

The Fearrington House, near Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is a country inn but what proprietor R.B. Fitch says about his hotel applies to every setting in the Mobil Five-Star galaxy. "What we offer our guests is romance. When they arrive here they know they're in a place that's beautiful and calm. They also know that we're here to add a wonderful experience to their lives."

UPWARDLY MOBIL

"Mobil Travel Guide," published by ExxonMobil Travel Publications, was founded in 1958 to serve travellers on the new U.S. interstate highway system—much as the hundred-year-old "Michelin Guide" came into being as a result of car travel in France.

Of the forty-thousand hotels in America, only twelve-and-a-half thousand are selected by "Mobil Travel Guide," and consequently every property starts out with at least One Star. The Mobil One-, Two-, and Three-Star ratings are based on facility evaluation. An inspector shows up unannounced, asks to be shown around, and fills out a two-hundred-plus item checklist. If the facility and services rate Three Mobil Stars, then an incognito service evaluation may be done to see whether the service warrants an upgrade to Mobil Four or Five Stars. (Consideration for Mobil Four- and Five-Star status isn't automatic however; such variables as reader feedback are vital.)

Inspectors do not identify themselves when they evaluate a Mobil Four- or Five-Star property. Rather, they check in for one or two nights, depending on the size of the facility, and begin filling out a five-hundred-item checklist. They come equipped with a stopwatch and a recorder to keep track of such things as room-service delivery time. Repeat visits occur and each property is reëvaluated every year, usually by a different inspector.

The difference between Mobil Four and Five Stars? It's the intangibles such as flawless service delivered at the highest level. On average, according to "Mobil Travel Guide," a Five-Star property gets you checked in within 3:20 minutes (28 seconds faster than a Four-Star one), delivers your bags within 7:23 minutes (almost three minutes faster), and costs $183 more per night or approximately $475.11.

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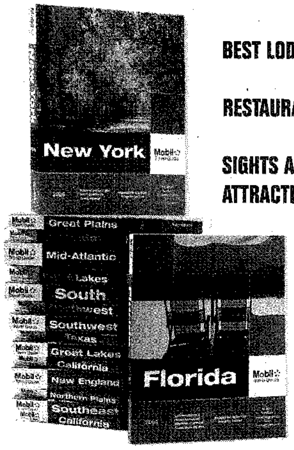

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up ahead, and then I saw my father and my uncles. They were trying to get the truck upright with the crane, and there was concrete all over the street. The guy who sold them the company was there, too, and he put his arm around my father and said, 'This is just the start, kid.' "

At Ferrara Bros. today, Ferrara is known as Joe, Jr., to distinguish him from his father, the company's president and one of two brothers still active in the business. I met Joe, Jr., at a seminar on concrete construction held at the New York Athletic Club last November, and a week later I spent part of a day at the company's headquarters, in College Point, in Queens, not far from the Whitestone Bridge. (Ferrara Bros. also has two plants in Brooklyn and one in Maspeth.) You may have seen the College Point plant without realizing what it was—perhaps while taking off from or landing at LaGuardia—because its tall, bright-orange silos are visible for miles.

Ferrara, who is forty-five, is an attorney (his law degree is from Fordham) and a certified public accountant. He joined the company in 1986, after working outside the concrete industry for several years. He puts in long hours—his office is almost hilariously messy—but he finds the work more satisfying than either of his two previous occupations. "I tell my dad that I probably could have earned more money and had fewer headaches at night as a lawyer or an accountant," he told me, "but I discovered I had portland cement in my veins. And in my lungs."

After we'd talked in the company's small conference room for a while, Ferrara took me outside to show me part of the concrete plant—a tall, long, narrow structure comprising silos, tanks, towers, hoppers, bins, and a water-slide-size conveyor belt rising to the very top of the structure from the company's aggregate storage area, off to the right. We walked around to the far side of the plant and up a steep flight of metal stairs to the batching tower, which is the plant's computerized control center. "People think that concrete is very fungible, and one size fits all," he said. "But it's not." Every load of ready-mixed concrete is made according to a specific recipe, which is known as a mix design, and there are thousands of combinations. In the batching room, we watched Mike Graff, the company's senior batcher, preparing a load of concrete for delivery to a huge sewage facility being built in Brooklyn by the city's Department of Environmental Protection, which is one of the region's largest consumers of concrete.

"This job wants it wet. It's a pump job, and they've got quite a ride, out to Flatlands, so they want a seven-inch slump." Slump is what it sounds like: a measure of the consistency of the unhardened mix. Graff was checking a digital readout from a microwave moisture probe, which, sixteen times a second, measured the percentage of water in the sand flowing past it, and a digital temperature scale, which, at that moment, was telling him that the water he was using had been heated to a hundred and thirteen degrees (to compensate for the cold air outside, which otherwise might have caused the new concrete to freeze on the way to the job—a disaster). Immediately to his left, a printer was producing a continuous record, called the tape, which showed the exact composition of every load and its compliance with, or variance from, the recipe dictated by the design.

"The state allows you a two-per-cent tolerance on each of the components," Ferrara said, "but this system is so precise that everything we do is within one-half of one per cent."

Boring old concrete has a lowly reputation in general, and it has an especially lowly reputation in New York City, where it has long been associated with organized crime. A former prosecutor told me recently, "Of all the industries that one could cast one's eye over, concrete was the most Mobbed-up."

Concrete played a major role in the most important organized-crime prosecution in the city's history, the epochal Commission case, in the mid-eighties. That case hobbled the Cosa Nostra in New York, by sending Carmine Persico, Anthony Salerno, Anthony Corallo, and a number of other Mob luminaries to prison for the rest of their lives, and by weakening racketeers' control of New York's construction industry and several of its associated labor unions. A central part of the prosecution concerned a scheme whereby four of the city's five major crime families—the Com-

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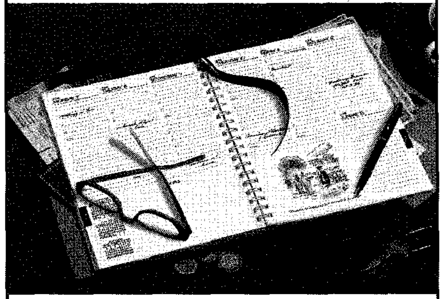

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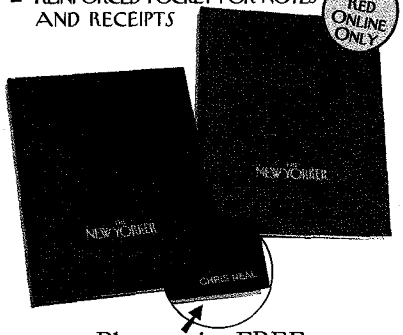

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2032

It is evening in the town of X,
where Death, who used to love me, sits
in a limo with a blanket spread across his thighs,
waiting for his driver to appear. His hair
is white, his eyes have gotten small, his cheeks
have lost their lustre. He has not swung his scythe
in years, or touched his hourglass. He is waiting
to be driven to the Blue Hotel, the ultimate resort,
where an endless silence fills the lilac-scented air,
and marble fish swim motionless in marble seas,
and where . . . Where is his driver? Ah, there she is,
coming down the garden steps, in heels, velvet evening gown,
and golden boa, blowing kisses to the trees.

—*Mark Strand*

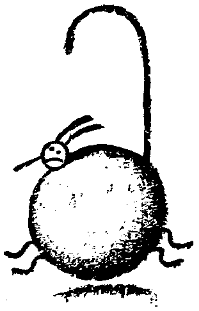
mission—extorted money from all but the smallest construction projects in New York City. Bidding on concrete-contracting work was rigged, so that big jobs were rotated among a small group of Mob-controlled contractors and suppliers, known as the Concrete Club. In addition, the Commission collected a "tax" of one or two per cent on almost all concrete work. The enforcer was Ralph Scopo, who was the president of the Cement and Concrete Workers District Council and a soldier in the Colombo crime family. Peter Lieb, who was an Assistant United States Attorney during that period, told me, "Scopo would go to a building site, and the owner of the main construction company would come out and sit with him in his car, and Scopo would talk about how 'the family' needs this money, and how you want to be sure that your wife and kids are O.K.—he was shockingly explicit, and that made it a very easy prosecution."

The Mob's tax on concrete work had a much bigger impact on construction costs than the percentages might suggest. Because competitive bidding was eliminated on big jobs, inflated costs raised the price for everything from raw materials to finished office space. The scheme flourished not only because hoodlums enforced it but also because compliance entailed benefits for many of the putative victims. Thomas D. Thacher II, who was the executive director of the Construction Industry Strike Force in the late eighties and now consults on construction projects, told me, "In return for paying that two per cent, you got guaranteed contracts, and you got good workers. You didn't have to pay them what you should have been paying them under the collective-bargaining agreement, and you didn't have to make certain contributions to the pension and welfare fund, and you could even hire some non-union workers. And if you said, 'No, I'm not going to play ball that way'—they put you out of business. Were you a victim or a co-conspirator?"

The Mob's control of construction in New York was so extensive, Thacher said, that it couldn't be attacked solely through law enforcement: if everyone in New York's construction industry who had a plausible link to organized crime had been put in jail, much of the industry, which is one of the city's largest, would have vanished. The solution, which Thacher and the Strike Force helped to devise, has involved combining key prosecutions ("prying away the iron fist finger by finger," in the words of a federal prosecutor I talked to) with regulatory reform, close monitoring of unions, and heightened screening and supervision of contractors—all aimed at transforming the industry without destroying it. These and other measures have had a significant effect, although they have by no means eliminated racketeering from building projects in the city; just this past February, for example, federal prosecutors indicted forty-two union officials, suspected crime-family members, and others involved with the operation of certain kinds of heavy equipment used in high-rise construction. And investigators I spoke with said that more cases are likely to come.

Ferrara Bros. wasn't a part of the Concrete Club, which included just two concrete suppliers, both now defunct. Like other companies connected with concrete, the Ferraras have attracted official suspicions over the years—Joe Ferrara told me, "We've been examined with microscopes, and I'm sure our phones have been tapped"—but, unlike some of their competitors, they've never been indicted. Thacher said it would have been impossible for any construction-related company to function in the city during the period of tightest Mob control without having figured out at least how to accommodate corrupt unions and racketeers, but he also said the relationship was a complex one. "One of the ironies is that a process can be corrupted without becoming dysfunctional," he said. "There was a time when the construction industry in New York, no question about it, was absolutely dominated by the Mob. But during that same time the construction industry in New York produced some of the most magnificent, structurally sound, and aesthetically beautiful buildings in the world."

There are two competing methods of building the frames of very tall buildings: steel and reinforced concrete. For many years, the only method was steel, whose main advantages as a high-rise building material are that a steel building can be put up quickly, and that steel's tremendous strength makes possible the creation of enormous interior spaces uninterrupted by columns or load-bearing walls. One disadvantage of steel is that it is vulnerable to fire; even large members can sag and fail in a fire, and structural steel must therefore be thoroughly fireproofed.



Reinforced concrete began to emerge as a competitor to steel in high-rise construction in recent decades, as its strength increased and its curing time went down. One of the city's pioneers is Donald Trump, whose Trump Tower, on Fifth Avenue, was the first high-rise in the city to be built with high-strength concrete, and whose Trump World Tower, near the United Nations, is the tallest reinforced-concrete building in the city (it is eight hundred and sixty feet) and the first building in New York to use concrete that has a compressive strength of twelve thousand pounds per square inch.

"I had a choice of steel or concrete, obviously," Trump told me. "I used concrete because it's more rigid than steel, and it's much better in fire. It's also soundproof. When you have concrete floors, you don't hear what the neighbors are saying. You don't quite have the flexibility with concrete that you have with steel, and you can't do as long a span, but it gives you more floors, because in a concrete building you don't have girders holding up the floor. My building opposite the United Nations would have been sixty-eight feet higher as a steel structure, with the same space inside."

In New York City today, builders tend to use steel for commercial buildings, whose tenants change so often that interior flexibility is a necessity, and to use reinforced concrete for apartment buildings and hotels, for all the reasons that Trump enumerated. Developers have also begun to build hybrid, or composite, buildings, in which the two systems are combined. One such structure is the immense Time Warner Center, which is now nearing completion on the site of the old Coliseum, on Columbus Circle. The lower floors, which will be occupied mainly by commercial tenants and will therefore require wide-open, adaptable floor plans, are framed in steel; the upper floors, which will contain mainly apartments and hotel rooms, are made of cast-in-place reinforced concrete.

On a cold day last December, I was given a tour of the structure by Gerald Bianco, who works for Bovis Lend Lease, the construction manager. Before we started, Bianco asked me if I was afraid of heights, and I said I didn't know. "We'll find out the hard way, that's for sure," he said cheerfully. We put on hard hats and, along with various construction workers, rode to the top of the building's south tower, roughly eight hundred feet above West Fifty-eighth Street, in a steel-and-

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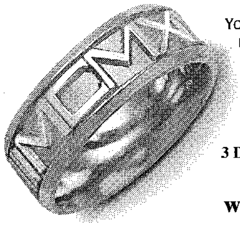

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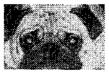

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plywood cage, which sometimes seemed to be dangling from a string. Bianco leaned jauntily against the plywood door at our end of the cage as we ascended—a door that fortunately turned out to be latched more securely than it appeared. I wasn't as casual as he was, but I bore up pretty well. At the top, we crossed from the hoist to the building by way of a narrow plywood bridge, and stepped into what may by now be a penthouse apartment but was then just a wind-swept, unenclosed concrete shell strewn with drifted snow, construction debris, and eddied piles of coffee cups.

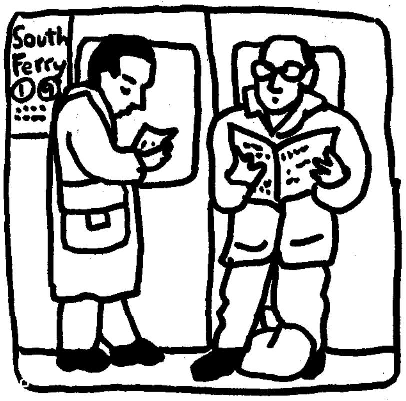
Concrete-construction techniques, like local accents and dialects, vary from region to region and from city to city, sometimes dramatically. The most unusual feature of concrete construction in New York City is that buildings rise at a rate of one floor every other day—a sustained pace that, until very recently, was unmatched anywhere else in the world. "We're able to do it because of the volume of work in New York, because of the climate, because of the unions, because of the workforce, because of the close proximity of the concrete plants, and so forth," Bianco said. "You won't find it in the engineering books, and it's not really a recognized practice anywhere else, but it's tried and true." The forms used in concrete work in New York are also anomalous: they are made not of steel but of plywood, and they are nailed together from scratch—a technique that looks almost prehistoric to high-rise builders in other parts of the country.

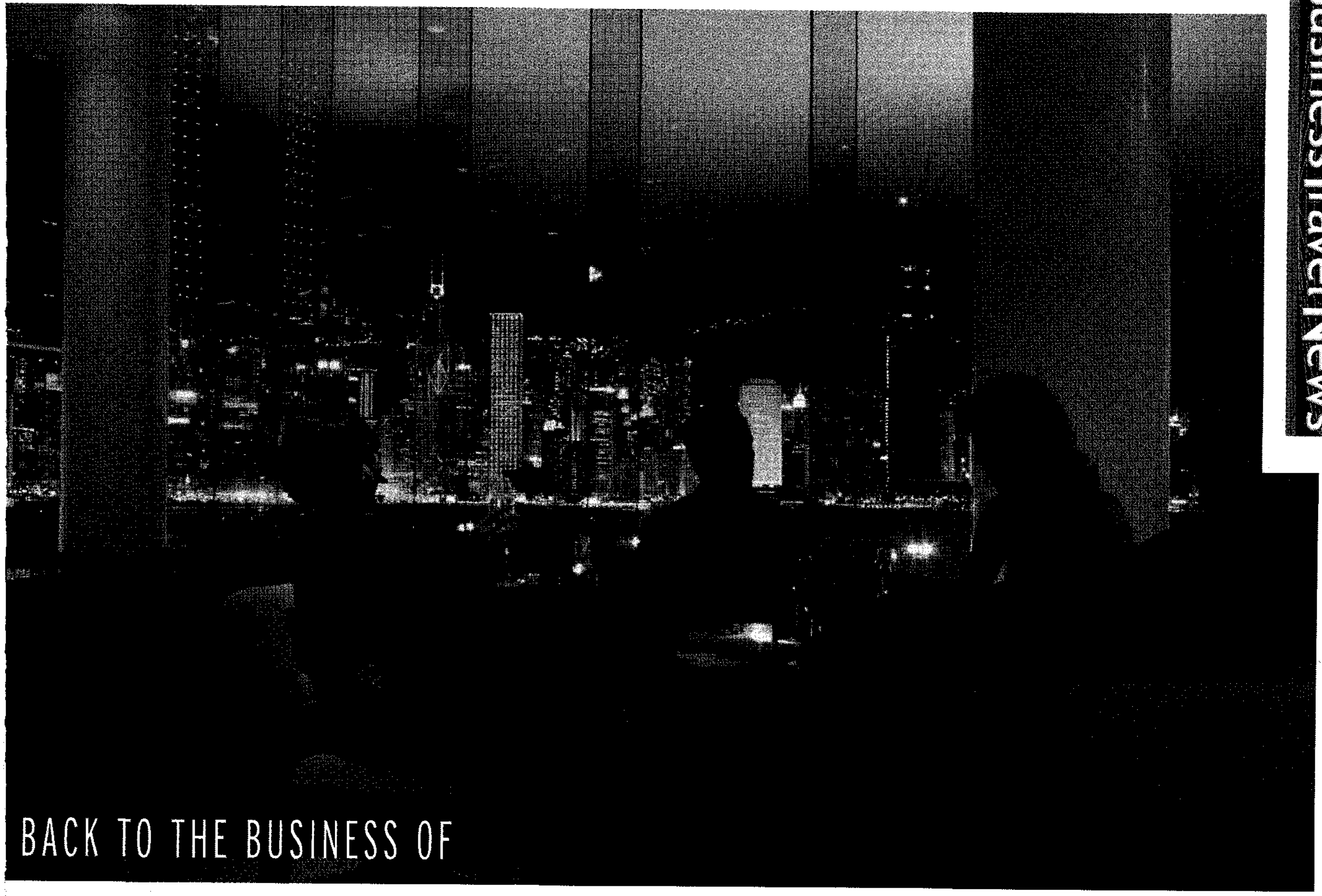
The concrete used in the Time Warner Center—roughly a hundred thousand cubic yards of it—was supplied by a Ferrara Bros. competitor, Quadrozzi Concrete, which also supplied the concrete for, among other projects, Trump World Tower and the new Bloomberg building, on the East Side. (John Quadrozzi, the company's president, pleaded guilty in 1993 to making payoffs to the Mob.) "We hoisted the concrete up in three-yard buckets," Bianco said, as a bitter wind from the west tore at the orange-plastic safety netting stretched around the yawning perimeter of the slab on which we were standing. "We basically poured from north to south. By the time the south half of the floor is being poured, the surveyor has already snapped lines on the north half, and then the carpenters follow, and begin standing the vertical elements, the columns and the walls. By the time the whole floor is poured, you want the carpenters to be about a third of the way across. Then, the next morning, you blitz the rest, and meanwhile you're working on the deck above, building the forms, placing the rebar."

From the top floor, Bianco and I gradually worked our way back down through the building, ending at its most arresting feature, a twelve-hundred-seat performance space belonging to Jazz at Lincoln Center, one of the partners in the construction project. The theatre is entirely contained within a six-story-tall concrete box, which rests on large natural-rubber pads and is nowhere rigidly connected to the rest of the building. The function of the concrete, the rubber, and the structural isolation is to improve the acoustics inside the theatre, and to isolate the musicians and their audiences from urban hubbub, especially from the various subway lines that pass directly underneath the building.

"Let's hop in the Jazz over here," Bianco said, leading me through a doorway-size opening. At the theatre's four corners, the four-inch gap between the concrete shell of the theatre and the concrete structure of the rest of the building had recently been reduced to half an inch because a seismic engineer became worried that in a major earthquake the theatre might swing like a wrecking ball. From there, we descended below the theatre, to see the rubber pads on which the Jazz rests. There are a hundred and fifty of them, and they are roughly the size of thick sofa cushions. "The steel skeleton of the Jazz was erected right on top of the pads," he said, "and then everything—everything—was encased in concrete."

The pads are sandwiched between





BACK TO THE BUSINESS OF LUXURY TRAVEL

After the business day officially ends, the negotiations continue at the luxe InterContinental Hong Kong's lobby bar overlooking Victoria Harbour.

Recent indicators are pointing to a modest recovery in corporate travel. Meanwhile, travel suppliers are pushing ahead with new premium products and services designed for corporate executives and frequent business travellers. When the economy was booming in the late nineteen-nineties, corporate executives were happy to splurge for optimum comfort and convenience furnished by hotels, ground transportation companies, and airlines—both commercial and private. Today, those same corporate leaders are more conscious of cost. So, mindful of the intense competition for customers with large expense accounts who demand high-end travel services while on the road, luxury travel providers are aiming to keep high-powered executives in top form without breaking the bank.

COME FLY WITH ME

Convinced that executive business travellers are once again willing to pay a little extra for a smoother and more comfortable air travel experience, several commercial airlines this summer have unveiled refurbished premium cabins. These feature lie-flat sleeper seats and offer a bevy of improved amenities and services. Because some carriers had eliminated their first-class cabins (either entirely or at least on certain routes), most upgrades today are business-class offerings that include the perks and pampering reminiscent of traditional first class.

For the most part, revamped business-class cabins are in development at such overseas carriers as Air France, Lufthansa, Qantas, and Virgin Atlantic. European carriers in particular are raising the bar in order to compete with British Airways, which for years has offered a business-class sleeper seat.

Stateside, Northwest Airlines recently announced improvements to its business class on international flights. "People want to arrive at their destination rested," says Fay Beauchine, Northwest vice president of sales and customer relations. "In today's environment, that is more important than ever." With premium amenities such as lie-flat seats and in-flight entertainment, the carrier hopes to entice new corporate customers. "Privacy is still a big issue with business-class passengers, so it is important to provide that choice too," says Beauchine.

Meanwhile, US Airways has added a first-class cabin to its shuttle fleet working heavy business routes in the Northeast corridor. Though some may question the appeal of a higher-priced product on flights lasting only an hour or so, US Airways senior vice president of marketing and revenue management B. Ben Baldanza explains that "By offering our customers first- and coach-class service on these key business routes, we will offer consistent premium-class service throughout our mainline network."

Farther up the luxury ladder, private jets continue to gain appeal competing for a greater share of the corporate travel market. Options such as traditional chartering, fractional jet ownership, pre-paid membership programs, and corporate shuttles—once the exclusive domain of the wealthiest individuals and the most senior corporate officers—now intrigue an expansive array of executives and frequent business travellers. "Business jet options are beginning to offer comparable pricing on some routes," says Phil Dunphy, senior manager of global travel for Pfizer Inc. "A company needs to look at the ease of use as well as the additional costs of ground transportation to bigger airports, particularly if its sites are located more than an hour from one. Also, if you can fly out and back in a day by using business jets, you can save on hotel and meal costs."

Although the private-jet market has been sluggish this year, some industry executives are forecasting an improvement as the economy rebounds. "The biggest difference we are seeing is that consumers are educating themselves better and are more particular about where they spend their money," says Tristan Lewis, national vice president of client services for Executive Jet Management. "Our charter fleet has grown to be the largest in the country, with particular growth in the Northeast and California markets. Having more aircraft available begets charter business."

Deluxe hotels like Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth in Toronto cater to corporate executives seeking top-drawer boardrooms. Booking private jets for business travel has gained appeal, with options ranging from traditional chartering to fractional aircraft ownership through companies such as Woodbridge, New Jersey-based NetJets.

Meanwhile, the most "executive" of all airline products, the sound barrier-busting *Concorde*, was recently grounded after three decades of three-and-a-half-hour transatlantic crossings. Last spring Air France and last month British Airways officially brought to a close the first era of supersonic transport when they ceased all Concorde flights. Though the industry is talking about developing a new generation of smaller supersonic jets that would cater to top corporate executives, no such aircraft are currently in production.

DOWN TO EARTH

The hotel market's top end seems to be improving for both buyer and seller. Hoteliers are gradually seeing business demand pick up, in part because their highest-paying guests are being charged less for traditional luxury products. For example, room rates at the most expensive hotels have softened somewhat since early 2001.

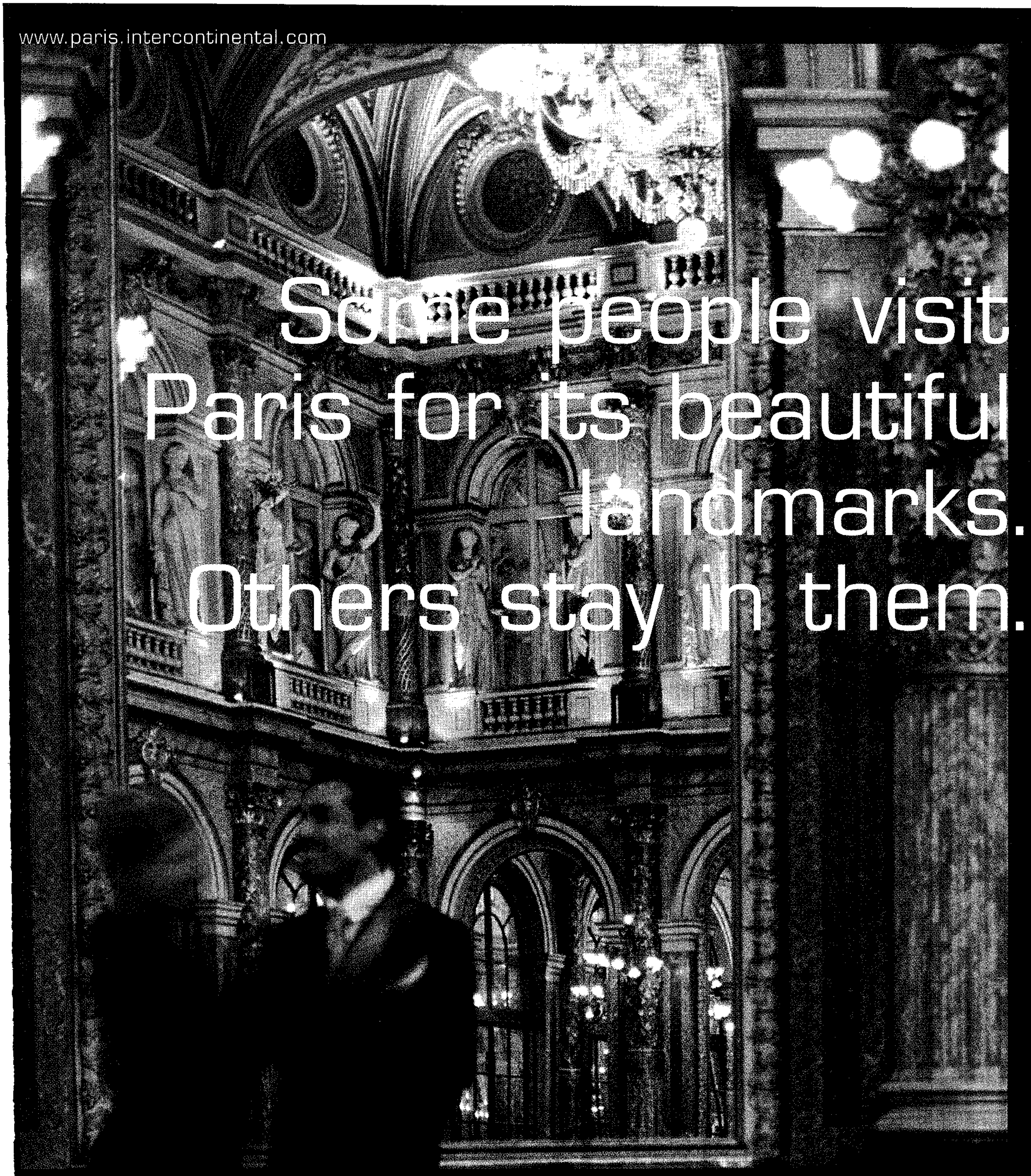
High-end hotel chains—including deluxe properties such as Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, Ritz-Carlton, and St. Regis—have made improvements in several customer service areas. In many hotels high-speed Internet access, once available for a fee, is now offered gratis. Privacy and security improvements are naturally high on the list of sought-after amenities, as are personalized service and guest recognition programs.

Many other amenities, such as twenty-four-hour room service and extended concierge and business center hours, simply represent a restoration of previously suspended perks, says Bjorn Hanson, global industry leader of the hospitality and leisure practice at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). But, he adds, "The business traveller is coming back, and since hotels cannot spend as much on advertising as they would like, they need to win guests. Therefore, quality of service and the personal touch are at levels we have not seen since 2000."

Hanson notes, however, that many other improvements, such as refurbished guest rooms and public areas, remain on hold for the time being. But according to PwC, consumer demand for upscale hotels, such as InterContinental Hotels & Resorts as well as Westin, Renaissance, Omni, Loews, JW Marriott, W Hotels, and Le Meridien, is expected to increase almost six per cent in 2004, following an expected three per cent increase for 2003.

Meanwhile, ground transportation companies are not overlooking the executive travel sector. Already catering to frequent business travellers, the Washington, D.C.-based chauffeured transportation company Carey International, for example, has partnered with In Motion Technology of Reston, Virginia to develop in-car Wi-Fi or wireless Internet connections. The company will soon be testing their concept of recreating an office environment for the in-transit business executive in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. Competitor BostonCoach is also tinkering with in-car Wi-Fi capabilities; it already offers power ports allowing executive travellers to use laptops, cell phones, and personal digital assistants.

Even though some bumps remain, travel suppliers see returning demand for technology and products at the high end of the business travel market. On the ground and in the air, they are providing new levels of support to help keep travelling executives effective and connected at reasonable cost.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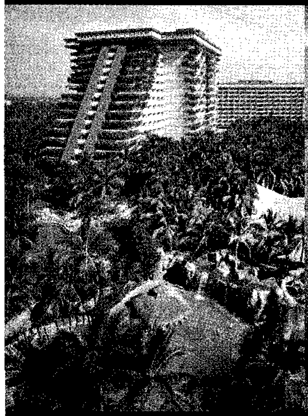

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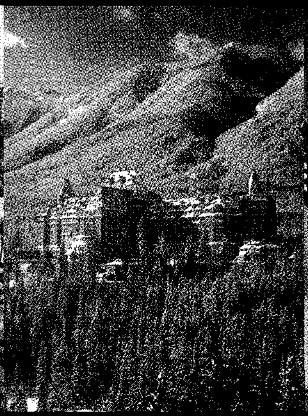

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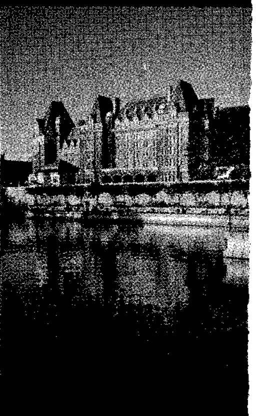

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steel plates, and their edges bulge under the almost inconceivable weight of the structure resting on them. "How long will that rubber last?" I asked.

"Well, that's a good question," Bianco said. "And we asked the same question, because, to be honest with you, I don't know how the hell you would ever replace the pads. But the answer is that the rubber has a life span very similar to the concrete. Which is forever, basically."

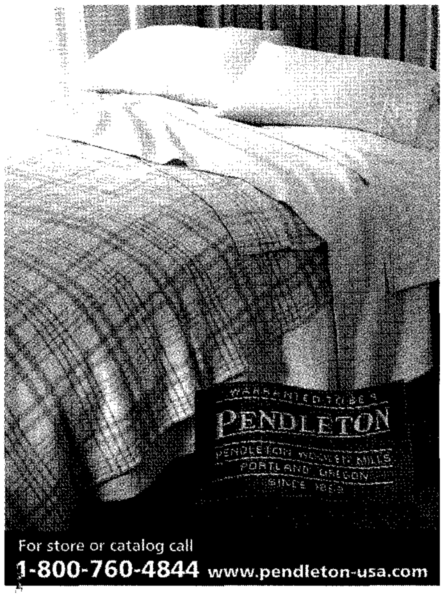
Last February, I travelled to Las Vegas to attend the World of Concrete, an annual trade show aimed at just about anyone who has just about anything to do with concrete. I was amazed by the scale of the show, which fully occupied the Las Vegas Convention Center's three cavernous exhibition halls (and one sprawling parking lot). Maps of the various exhibit areas filled six pages in the program, and the directory of exhibitors presented a bewilderingly brachiated taxonomy of concrete specialties and subspecialties: fifty-four companies selling "saws, walk-behind concrete"; twenty-one selling "saws, ride-on concrete"; nine selling "weep hole tubes & wicks"; fifty-two selling "epoxy, pastes & gels (nonsag)"; and on and on and on. Even the show's participants were outsized—as Christian Meyer had told me they would be. "I have never seen as many big men in one place," he said when I mentioned that I might be going to the show. "And big in several dimensions."

On my second afternoon in Las Vegas, I did something that quite a few of the show's big men did at some point during the week: I made a concrete pilgrimage to the Hoover Dam, which is about thirty miles southeast of the Strip and was once the largest concrete structure in the world. (Upon its completion, in 2009, the record-holder will be another dam, Three Gorges, in China.) The Hoover Dam was built between 1931 and 1936 by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and it spans a deep canyon carved by the Colorado River. It is more than seven hundred feet tall, more than twelve hundred feet wide at the top, and roughly six hundred and sixty feet thick at the base, and is made almost entirely of concrete—approximately 3.25 million cubic yards of it, or roughly six million tons, with an additional million cubic yards in various appurtenant structures. A two-lane highway runs across the top, connecting Nevada and Arizona.

I got to the dam in time to take one of the day's last tours. From the guide I learned that the dam was cast in interlocking rectangular columns measuring between twenty-five and forty feet on a side. New concrete was added to the tops of the columns in five-foot-tall sections, and in a staggered pattern, so that each new section could harden before more concrete was added on top or to any side. Workers known as puddlers stood inside the forms as each load was dumped, then spread the new concrete with shovels and (mainly) their feet. Buried within each new section were two separate networks of pipes: one that would later be used to inject portland-cement grout into cracks, joints, and gaps between columns; and one that would be used to cool the concrete as it cured, by circulating water through it. The dam's designers had realized that a dam-sized mass of concrete, during hydration, would generate and trap so much heat that without artificial cooling the structure would require a century and a quarter to cool down, and would develop spectacular cracks as it did. As each section of the dam reached and maintained the desired internal temperature, measured by thermometers also buried in the concrete, the cooling pipes serving it were disconnected, drained, and filled with grout.

After my tour ended, I walked onto the top of the dam, toward Arizona, and leaned over the belly-high parapet on the downstream side. The face of the dam plunges down and away, and it must engender dark yearnings in the minds of certain kinds of skateboarders. Despite everything I had heard and seen and read about the dam until that moment, it was only as I stood on its rim and gazed down toward the river far below that I gained a full, vertiginous sense of the extraordinary pile of concrete at my feet—the "callous, cruel lump," in the words of a visitor in the thirties. I felt the same sense of mild unease I felt once as I floated on my back in the deepest part of a deep lake and imagined the unsettling volume beneath me.

Anyway, here's the point I want to make: New York City adds concrete to itself at the rate of approximately one Hoover Dam every eighteen months. ◆



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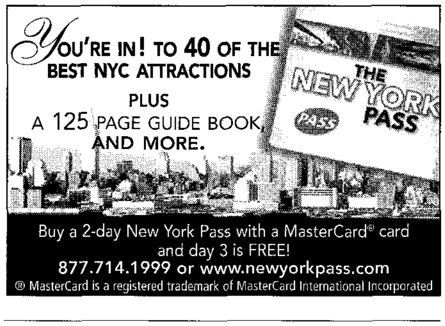
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ANNALS OF MEDICINE

THE REEVE EFFECT

Can an actor's determination to walk again change the way medical research is conducted?

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

The home of the actor Christopher Reeve is in the middle of horse country. He lives in Westchester County, down a winding country road that takes you past several estates with stables and riding tracks. At the end is a sprawling farmhouse set on a hill and surrounded by spruce and oak; a graded incline provides wheelchair access to the front door.

It has been eight years since Reeve broke his neck at an equestrian competition in Culpeper, Virginia. After his horse, Buck, stopped suddenly in front of an obstacle, Reeve flipped forward and suffered what doctors call a "hangman's injury": a fracture of the upper cervical vertebrae. Death by hanging often results from suffocation, and Reeve was heard to say, "I can't breathe."

The crushed vertebrae caused massive hemorrhaging within Reeve's upper spinal cord. The location of a spinal-cord injury determines its consequences. Indeed, a minute difference in the trajectory of Reeve's fall would have left him in dramatically different circumstances. An MRI scan that Reeve received after his accident suggested that if he had landed with his head one-sixteenth of an inch to the left he would have died instantly. An impact slightly more to the right would have left him with a concussion, and he would have been back on his feet within weeks.

Reeve's injury left him paralyzed from the shoulders down. He was unable to breathe on his own, and doctors at a Virginia hospital immediately placed him on a ventilator. Reeve was informed that his injury was permanent, and that he would no longer feel sensation in ninety per cent of his body.

Upon arriving at Reeve's front door, I was greeted by an assistant—he employs several—and led to his office, where he sat waiting in his wheelchair. On a shelf behind him were pictures of his wife, Dana, and his three children, and a large blue button that read "PROUD YALE PARENT." His daughter Alexandra is the captain of Yale's polo team. The Reeves are clearly not a superstitious family.

This spring, an experimental electrical-stimulation device was implanted in Reeve's diaphragm, and he now breathes without a respirator for hours at a time, so his speech has become more fluid and his voice more resonant. He gasped only occasionally. Reeve weighs two hundred and seventeen pounds and is six feet four, and even in his motorized wheelchair he looks imposing. The most striking change in his appearance has nothing to do with his accident. Reeve has alopecia areata, a condition that causes patchy hair loss, and in February he had his head shaved.

"I was told from the very start that it was hopeless, that it was impossible for me to regain movement below the shoulders," he began. "But every scientist should remove the word 'impossible' from his lexicon." Not only does Reeve want to cure himself; he is determined to transform medical research, which he feels is constrained by excessive caution. "Research should not be reckless," he said, but it does need to be fearless. "If you don't add courage to the equation, the scientific aspect will go to waste."

In his 1998 autobiography, "Still Me," Reeve writes that he has a controlling, perfectionist nature. As an actor, he would obsessively analyze his scripts, looking for moments that could trip him up. Before the Culpeper contest, he walked the cross-country course three times and drew a map, with extensive annotations. In our meeting, he displayed a similar tendency—his words were as carefully chosen as those of a Presidential candidate.

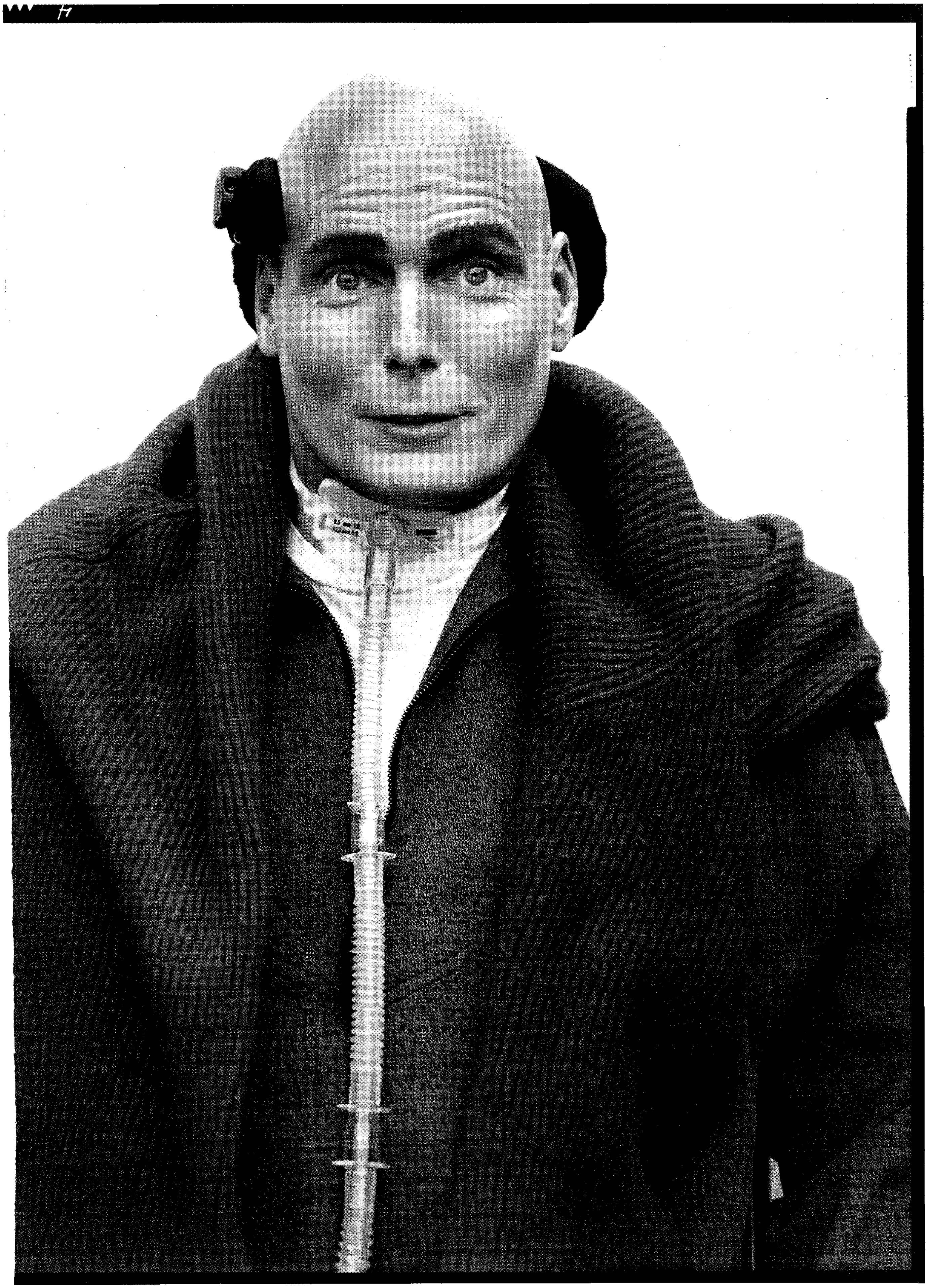
Soon after we began talking, Dana, who is an actress, carried in a tray with some lunch—turkey with sliced cucumber. (Reeve can eat whatever he likes.) As a nurse assisted him with his meal, he described the progress he has made since he began a regular, intense physical-therapy regimen, in 2000. "I am able to use the biceps of my right arm against resistance," he said. "My left arm is weaker. Perhaps my strongest and most remarkable recovery has been in my legs." I noticed that his lower body did not appear to be as shrunken as that of the typical quadriplegic.

During our conversation, Reeve was largely immobile. The only movements I saw were hand gestures; he would lift his index finger and point it, often without any hesitation or visible effort. He saves greater physical exertions for his therapy sessions. I asked him if he could move his legs. "A bit," he said, adding that he now exercised regularly in a swimming pool. "I can push myself off the side with my legs. And I can make a snow-angel movement with my arms." The buoying effect of the water, Reeve explained, helped him make the slow, sweeping motion.

"One day, I expect to get up from this wheelchair," he said. This claim, which Reeve has made often in speeches, has not been well received by certain scientists and advocates for the disabled. Some critics attribute his words to a state of denial; others have been more caustic, calling him a spoiled celebrity who raises false hopes. The columnist Charles Krauthammer, who is wheelchair-bound and has a medical degree, wrote an angry appraisal of Reeve after the actor appeared in a television com-

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Christopher Reeve, October, 2003. "If we push, that's our prerogative," he said. "Scientists, of course, have the right to push back."



MONIQUE LAZAR IS
BAD VIBE

"She's a Rolex. He's a Timex."

• •

mercial touting advances in spinal-cord research; the ad used computer imagery to make it appear as if Reeve could walk again. Calling the ad "disgracefully misleading," Krauthammer wrote, "In Reeve's view, reality is a psychological crutch. His propaganda to that effect undermines those—particularly the young and newly injured—who are struggling to face reality, master it and make a life for themselves from their wheelchairs."

Reeve is aware that his intention to recover has been dismissed, even denigrated. Yet he is not as naïve as some of his doubters think. Reeve has a dogged intelligence, and in the past eight years he has developed a nuanced understanding of the biology of spinal-cord injury; he has learned how the scientific establishment sets priorities and conducts its research; and he has deciphered the ways that different branches of the government permit or bar innovative medical treatments. Reeve knows that his fame gives him unique access to the media, to politicians, and to fund-raising dollars. By exploiting these resources, he has set out to change the way things are done in the clinic, the laboratory, and the government. He believes that only by causing a revolution in all three realms does he have a chance.

It is perhaps easy to view Reeve's quest as one driven by hubris; it is far from certain that he will walk again. However, the steady, incremental progress he has made is extraordinary and, to many scientists, confounding. Indeed, the results have been so encouraging that mainstream researchers are reconsidering the dogma that long-term paralysis is irreversible—and paralyzed patients around the world are beginning to follow Reeve's lead.

The spinal cord is about an inch in diameter and has a soft, jellylike texture; it is protected by the long chain of vertebrae. The cord houses millions of nerves, which transmit crucial signals between the brain and the rest of the body. Extending from each nerve cell is an axon, a comparatively long, threadlike projection that can convey signals to a neighboring nerve, creating a pathway. Some of the nerve pathways that pass through the spinal cord help control muscle movements and regulate blood pressure; others allow us to feel pain, touch, and temperature.

When a fracture dislocates the spine and shatters the vertebral bones, small hemorrhages from broken blood vessels seep into the viscous tissue of the spinal cord, resulting in swelling. Since the cord is contained within the bone of the vertebral column, there is little room for expansion, and the circulation of vital oxygen and nutrients is cut off. Nerve cells within the cord are starved. As these cells die, they release toxic chemicals, particularly glutamate, an amino acid that overexcites the surrounding nerve cells, causing inflammation. That is why Reeve was given an intravenous dose of methylprednisolone, a steroid, shortly after the accident. In a 1990 study, a team led by Dr. Wise Young, a neuroscientist at Rutgers University, showed that a prompt dose of methylprednisolone could limit inflammation and spinal-cord damage.

Even after methylprednisolone therapy, many surviving nerve cells in the damaged spinal cord begin to die. This process is poorly understood, but it is believed that the cells, programmed to sense a hostile environment, self-destruct. A bruised spinal cord resembles a landscape after napalm: one axon after another has been turned into a severed stump. Where cells once resided, large cavities develop that fill with fluid. Over time, the inflammation subsides, but scars form, further distorting any surviving nerve pathways.

Reeve spent thirty days at the hospital in Virginia. "In 1995, it was considered a miracle that I survived," he said. His heart stopped beating on the way to the hospital; in the days after his resuscitation, he developed pneumonia, a urinary-tract infection, two ulcers, and skin lesions. He considered committing suicide, but Dana helped change his mind. "Chris had to make his own decision," Dana told me. "I was very clear that I was in it for the long haul. I said, 'You're still you, and I love you. Let's give it two years, and if in that time life is too agonizing let's reëvaluate.' "

Reeve was transferred to the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, in West Orange, New Jersey. Like all new patients at Kessler who have suffered a spinal-cord injury, Reeve was given an instruction manual to orient him to his new life. "I read the manual in its entirety, and there was nothing in it about an injury like mine," he said. Patients like Reeve were not expected to live long.

With Dana's help, he began to investigate different approaches to rehabilitation. "I was the link to the outside world," she said. "I was like a chief of staff. We were bombarded with information and offers of help. Once he was able, he grabbed the reins and took over."

Nearly everything that Reeve read asserted that patients like him could not improve. He eventually discovered, however, that a few physicians and neuroscientists had taken a contrarian position. One was V. R. Edgerton, a neuroscientist at U.C.L.A. Edgerton had theorized in the early eighties that the spinal cord could function independently of the brain. This was at odds with the prevailing view that the spinal cord was merely a cable connecting brain and body. "When scientists think they know how something works, it becomes difficult to get new ideas accepted," Edgerton told me. Virtually no decent scientist would study spinal-cord injury. "The dominant view was: it's a hopeless situation," he said. Spinal-cord-injury research was considered "the graveyard of neurobiology."

Edgerton began experimenting with cats whose spinal cords had been cut with a scalpel midway down their backs. The injured cats were placed in a harness and put on a treadmill. The idea was to make the cats mimic normal walking, to see if inducing such repetitive activity could reawaken circuits that Edgerton believed had been shut down by the injury. The experiment was a success: after using the treadmill for three to six months, most of the cats could walk again.

Later work in Edgerton's laboratory showed that glycine and GABA, amino acids that inhibit communication between neurons, flood the spinal-cord area after an injury; with repetitive activity on the treadmill, the levels of these amino acids fall. "Another interesting aspect was that only those networks that you train improve," Edgerton told me. When the cats were trained expressly to stand up, they were unable to walk, because they had not been taught how to step forward.

In a paper, Edgerton called the neural structure in the lumbar spinal cord a "central pattern generator." This generator was like a small computer, he suggested. Not only did it govern subconscious motor activity like walking but it had a form of memory, which could be reactivated through rehabilitation.

"He couldn't sell this idea anywhere," Reeve said of Edgerton's argument. "But he kept at it at U.C.L.A., and it made perfect sense to me. It doesn't take much brainpower to walk. Walking is almost autonomic."

In the late eighties, Dr. Anton Wernig, a neurophysiologist at the University of Bonn, in Germany, decided to find out if Edgerton's results with cats could be reproduced in humans. For his study, Wernig selected patients who had severe but not total cord damage: their ability to move was markedly limited but they were not completely paralyzed. As he began to recruit patients, including quadriplegics, he met with resistance from other physicians. "They said, 'Why the hell do you want to have them walk?' " he recalled. "I realized that if there is no interest in experimenting with people with spinal-cord injury, there will be no data."

Wernig's experiment was inspired by the observation that when newborn babies are held upright, their toes touching the ground, they spontaneously move their feet in a stepping motion. To him, this suggested that there was an innate "program" within the human spinal cord for walking; perhaps this program could be retrieved, like an intact file on a damaged hard drive.

Wernig spent the next several years refining ways to help patients perform patterned activities on a treadmill: optimizing the harness, foot weights, and, most important, the speed at which the paralyzed person steps. Some of Wernig's patients underwent therapy within a few weeks of their injury; others had been injured years earlier.

In 1995, Wernig published a controlled study that included thirty-three patients who had been wheelchair-bound for an extended period. After completing Wernig's regimen, twenty-five patients were able to walk independently, seven could walk with help, and one did not improve. Of the control group, which received traditional physical therapy, only one was able to walk unassisted.

Reeve was excited when he heard about such daring research. He decided that he was going to begin aggressive physical therapy, but he soon realized that his body wasn't ready. "It took most of the summer of 1995 to become stabilized enough to do *any* form of exercise," Reeve told me. "I was quite fragile. By October, 1995, I was able to begin therapy at Kessler." The doctors at the rehabilitation clinic introduced him to a process known as "e-stim." Reeve lay on a bed, electrical wires attached to the mus-

"Don't mind me, Richie—it's just the rabies talking."

cles in his buttocks, thighs, and calves. A computer program sequentially stimulated these muscles to re-create the sequence of contraction and relaxation involved in physical exertion. Reeve was retraining his body to perform work.

More important, Reeve began riding a specialized stationary bicycle while electrodes stimulated his lower body to perform pedalling motions. This exercise, which gave him a cardiovascular workout and increased his bone density, offered a crucial combination of patterned activity and electrical stimulation. In 1998, Reeve began working on a treadmill without electrical assistance. With the help of physical therapists, he was placed in a harness and his torso was held steady while aides guided his feet on the treadmill. This patterned activity was aimed at reawakening the preset circuitry for walking within his spinal cord.

Despite these efforts, there was no clear change in Reeve's condition. In retrospect, he attributes the lack of progress during the first five years of his injury to his own inconsistency in exercising. He had thrown himself into a number of creative projects, such as writing his autobiography and directing "In the Gloaming," a film for HBO. When he wasn't working, he was often too sick to exercise. Like most quadriplegics, he suffered life-threatening medical complications that required prolonged hospitalizations. He developed blood clots behind his knees; he required treatment for a collapsed lung. "Once, I was dropped while being transferred back from the bike to the wheelchair, and my humerus snapped like a matchstick," Reeve recalled. To stabilize his arm, doctors inserted a titanium rod extending from the top of his shoulder to his elbow.

Reeve kept pursuing a contrarian but scientifically grounded approach to recovery. "My faith is in science," he told me. In 2000, he began a more consistent exercise regimen on the electrical-stimulation bike. When he first started on it, he could pedal for only five minutes; now he was pumping for a half hour or more.

Within several months, Reeve began to show improvement. One summer night, when Dana cuddled next to him in bed, he realized that he could sense her touch. In September, he was talking to Dana and making an emphatic point when, suddenly, his left index finger rose up.

"Are you doing that on purpose?" Dana said.

"No," Reeve said.

"Why don't you try?"

He did, and he moved his finger again. (Or, as Reeve put it, with clinical detachment, "It responded.")

In November, at a conference in New Orleans, Reeve met with John McDonald, an ambitious spinal-cord researcher at Washington University in St. Louis. McDonald agreed to supervise his therapy, and that winter, for the first time since his accident, Reeve entered a swimming pool. Around this time, Reeve found that he could wiggle the toes on his left foot. "The sequence didn't make any sense," he said. "So I thought, Why shouldn't I try everything?" In 2001, Reeve discovered that he could move his right leg slightly when lying on his back. His left leg revived next. Finally, Reeve's arms started to respond; he still can't lift them while sitting up, but his exercises in the pool are making them stronger. His workouts are now so rigorous, he told me, that he often feels muscle burn afterward.

Reeve's drive to heal himself is so relentless that he doesn't allow himself to experience elation at these achievements. "I say to myself, 'Now, what's next?' I know I have a long way to go." He paused. "It's much like being an astronaut. They know the drill and all the possible contingencies so well that the flight is almost anticlimactic. Neil Armstrong even calculated what he would say when he landed on the moon. They spent hours deciding what his phrase should be. They didn't want astronauts to let their emotions get the better of them."

Upon achieving a milestone, he says, his mind is filled not with wonder but with data that he can "report back to mission control." When I asked him about the thrill of floating in a pool again, he responded dutifully. "The first time I went in, I felt grateful, and I felt muscles in my lower back release and I entered a very relaxed state of mind," he said.

"This is Cliff. He's a neo-con."

"I'm making this decision on principle, just to see how it feels."

• •

When Reeve is in the pool, he puts his legs up against a side wall while a therapist stands behind him, pushing against his shoulders. "He really has to dig in to resist me," Reeve told me. "My therapist ends up standing with one leg in front of the other, knees bent, to have a solid base of support to offer maximum resistance." At Reeve's request, the therapist goads him, saying, "You're pathetic!" or "What happened to your legs? They didn't show up this week?"

McDonald sounds far more ebullient than Reeve does about his progress. "The adage was you're going to get most of your recovery in the first six months, and if you haven't gotten it by then, you're over," he told me. "As far as I know, no human being has *ever* been reported to have substantial recovery after two years when he had no recovery in the beginning. Chris shattered that myth. That's really the take-home message, that a very delayed but substantial recovery is possible, even in the worst-case scenario."

McDonald's association with Reeve has allowed him to create a flourishing rehabilitation institute in St. Louis. Forty patients are now undergoing treatment. McDonald recently started a pediatric program. "I credit Chris with leading me down this path," he told me.

In 2001, McDonald began studying groups of paralyzed patients. He discovered that patients who used the electrical-stimulation bike had fewer pressure sores, blood clots, and infections. "The best way to avoid skin breakdown is put two inches of muscle on your buttocks," McDonald said. "The best way to build bone density is to put radial forces on bone. The bike is the best way to do that."

McDonald also conducts research on animals. In one experiment, he severed the spinal cords of rats, then implanted an electrical-stimulation device in their hind limbs. The device produced a gaitlike behavior in the animals. The animals with the device were dissected; compared with animals in the control group, they showed a sixty-to-eighty-per-cent increase in the development of cells that mature into neurons. McDonald believes that a similar process of nerve regeneration is taking place inside Reeve's body. McDonald's research, which will be presented at a meeting of the Society for Neuroscience this weekend in New Orleans, is some of the first documented evidence that functional electrical stimulation can inspire neurons to regenerate.

Claims about Reeve's recovery were initially met with skepticism by scientists. Some wondered whether he was simply what is called "an outlier"—a rare case that is nearly miraculous but essentially irrelevant to understanding the biology of the problem. To counter such doubts, McDonald and Reeve have rigorously documented both his progress and that of other patients who are undergoing similar treatment. "I made at least four visits to Washington University, and then also Dr. McDonald came here at least three times," Reeve told me. "So I'd say I've had a minimum of seven evaluations."

In 2002, after Reeve regained sensation in his left foot, his neural pathways were studied using MRI imaging. At the same moment that the bottom of his left foot was touched, his brain was scanned, in order to determine what part of the cerebral cortex registered the sensation. To assess his motor function, he voluntarily moved his index finger while inside the MRI machine. Reeve's restored perception and movements were shown to be controlled by the same parts of the cortex used by healthy adults. "My brain did not need to reorganize to get the functional recovery that I have had," Reeve said. Some of Reeve's neural pathways controlling muscle movement might have remained intact despite the severe trauma, and exercise finally reawakened them. Possibly there had been regeneration in the spinal cord, and the new nerve cells had made the right connections. McDonald can't explain it precisely; Reeve's case remains mysterious.

"No one is sure yet what is the exact explanation," Reeve said, then grinned. "If I were a mouse, they could sacrifice me and take a look. But let's wait a few years before we contemplate something like that."

In other tests, Reeve's foot was placed on the shoulder of a physical therapist; his knee was then bent to a ninety-degree angle. He pushed and straightened out his leg against the therapist's resistance. McDonald used an electronic device to gauge how quickly Reeve's muscles responded to the therapist's command to push. The "conduction velocity" for this voluntary contraction of his quadriceps was normal.

"You know what's remarkable?" McDonald told me. "I just recently saw him, and he's continuing to progress. He hasn't even plateaued." Reeve's bone density, he noted, is also now in the normal range. His muscle strength is around eighty per cent. The key challenge that remains, McDonald said, is for Reeve to develop the coördination and balance to use his muscles effectively.

When I updated Anton Wernig on the progress Reeve had made—in particular, his ability to push off with his legs and make snow-angel movements in a pool—he said it was "shocking." He was also cautious: it was still difficult to prove that all the changes were related to the rehabilitation program. "We have no information on people like this," he said. "We would need a control group to absolutely show that the recovery could not be spontaneous."

McDonald also recognizes that an experiment of one has limited value. Accordingly, he now has clinical results on muscle mass and bone density for twenty patients treated in St. Louis with patterned-activity therapy. He will soon be submitting the data for publication. Exercising on the electrical-stimulation bike three times a week for an hour restored patients' muscle mass and strength substantially. Bone density increased to a level where fractures were unlikely. McDonald believes that one reason paralyzed people have never regained significant movement is that their bodies are so severely atrophied; even when nerve pathways do reawaken or regenerate, there is no muscle left to do the work.

McDonald will also soon report that the twenty patients have experienced a significant restoration of sensation. "They have some proprioception," he said, meaning that they know where their body is in space. "And they can feel pain, which is important in avoiding injuries."

One of McDonald's youngest patients is Jessica Hill, who just turned six years old. She was born prematurely and developed meningitis. The infection led to a stroke in her spinal cord; the blood vessels that feed the cord tissue shut down. "When we brought her home from the hospital, she was paralyzed," her mother, Leann, told me. "She had nothing from the nipple line down, no feeling, no movement. She was like a wet noodle, just hung down straight."

The Hills live in St. Jacob, Illinois, across the Mississippi River from St. Louis. Kevin Hill does road maintenance for the neighboring city of Troy, and Leann is a housewife who works part time in a restaurant. "None of the doctors would give us anything for the future," Leann said. "There was nothing about exercise, nothing about making her muscles stronger, nothing about what her potential might be. The doctors were from the old school. The therapist would just stretch her limbs so that her muscles wouldn't tighten up." When Jessica was two years old, the Hills saw a television program about John McDonald and the St. Louis clinic. McDonald agreed to enroll the child.

Initially, Jessica was placed in a Big Wheel tricycle, with her legs strapped to the pedals. Her parents pushed her around the house to simulate bike exercise. Later, Leann and a neighbor rigged a motor to a stationary bicycle. They also got a treadmill, strapped Jessica in a harness, and weighted her feet to show her how to step and walk. "We did the treadmill as many times a day as we could," Leann recalled. Insurance would not pay for the treadmill, she added, so the family held a benefit to cover the cost.

After six months of intensive patterned activity, Jessica exhibited twitches of spontaneous movement in her hips. Then she began responding to touch. "At first, when we tested her by giving her little pinches over her chest, she couldn't feel anything," Leann said. "Then she could just feel it towards her belly button, and then farther down. Now she can feel stuff everywhere."

Jessica has also started to move her limbs. "When she sits over the edge of a table, she can swing her legs back and forth," Leann told me. "In the pool, she can lift her feet up and down. Jessica can also crawl across the floor on her own, propelling herself by her legs."

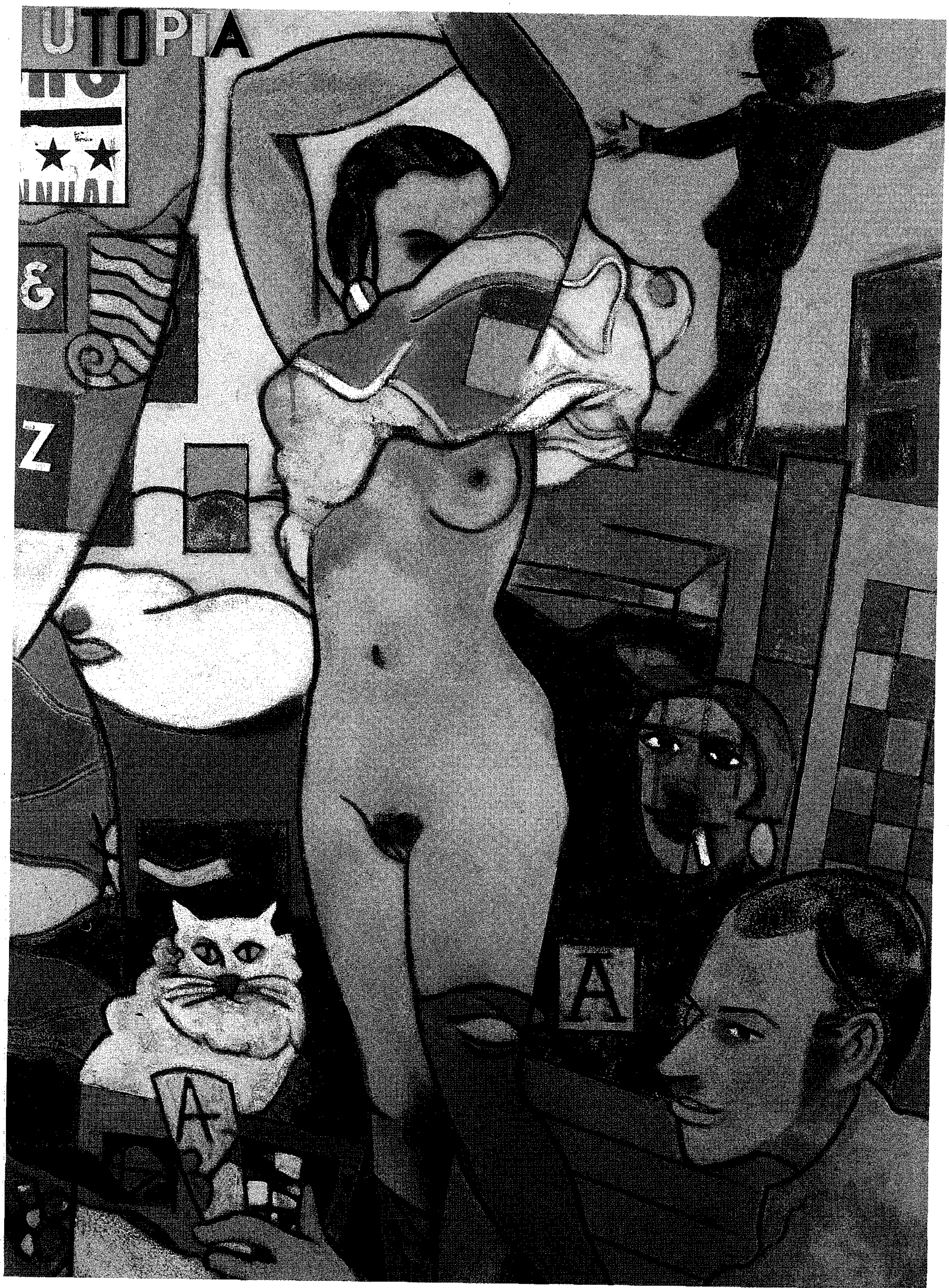
I asked Leann what she thought about Christopher Reeve. "Every step that he makes, that he moved a finger or moved a toe, for us, we know how incredible that is. That would be like me running a marathon. Seeing the progress he is making, it keeps us going."

Critics note that Reeve has financial resources that far exceed those of ordinary families. I asked him how he pays for the team of eighteen people, from nurses to physical therapists, who regularly assist him. (His annual medical expenses exceed five hundred thousand dollars a year; his insurance covers two-thirds of that.) Before the accident, Reeve explained, he was a member of three unions, and his disability benefits were unusually large, totalling some four million dollars. He also receives free equipment from manufacturers who hope to draw attention to their products; one company gave him an electrical-stimulation bike, which cost a hundred thousand dollars, for home use.

Reeve is unapologetic about mobilizing his resources to sustain his life and spur his recovery. He points out that he has worked tirelessly to encourage bold scientific research. To help ordinary families, he argues, exotic experiments need to become everyday procedures. And Reeve believes that too many researchers lack a sense of urgency.

As Reeve became acquainted with the scientific community, he grew frustrated by the widespread careerism. "Professors with tenure submit a grant application to get a little bit of money to try to have a little bit more success, which would then get them another grant and then another few years to achieve another little bit of success, but not to launch a major preëmptive strike to get rid of the whole problem," he said. Later, he added, "I want things to happen quickly. I certainly want to benefit within my lifetime. I don't want to get out of this wheelchair at the age of seventy-five. I am fifty-one, and am now very healthy, and would like to be out of the chair very soon. I'm not willing to resign myself to being an advocate for research that will benefit people only after I'm gone. I'm not that noble." He laughed, but it wasn't a joke.

Reeve has begun to confront scientists directly, speaking at major conferences about his concerns. Recently, he gave a speech at a meeting of neurosci-



UTOPIA PARKWAY *An homage to Joseph Cornell is among works by Richard Merkin in an exhibit at the Wickiser Gallery.*

entists, and said, "I would really like it if, on your way home from the laboratory one evening, you would stop by a rehabilitation center, and watch those people lying on mats, trying to move an arm, or even just a finger, or trying desperately to sit up. And then take that vision back with you to work the next morning."

Such exhortations don't always charm his audience. "You know, a lot of the scientists were very offended by that speech," he recalled. "They were offended that I would tell them how to do their work. They were offended by the implication that they didn't care. But what I'm saying is that some are not working fast enough." Reeve doesn't mind if he comes across as irritating or even bullying. "I have nothing to worry about with respect to their reactions. My injury taught me to throw caution to the winds in terms of what I say. It's extremely liberating, actually. Because, really, what do I have to lose? There is not much more you can do to me."

Last month, the Lasker Foundation, which is dedicated to the promotion of scientific research, gave Reeve an award for "heroic advocacy for medical research in general and victims of disability in particular." In his acceptance speech, Reeve said that the award had offered him "encouragement to be even more annoying and difficult in the future."

When I spoke to scientists, many complained that Reeve's impatience could lead to premature conclusions or faulty data. Nobody, however, would speak on the record. "He has gotten impatient when he's heard the answer 'We don't know enough,'" one researcher said of Reeve. "You can almost hear him say, 'Well, you're not the one on the respirator.' And yet doing something just because someone's situation is desperate—that's not acceptable." *Nature*, the scientific journal, published a news article last May about how researchers felt pressured by Reeve and other advocates. When I showed him the piece, his tone was icy. "If we push, that's our prerogative," he said. "And scientists, of course, have the right to push back."

Early on, Reeve realized that it would take more than rhetoric to move the scientific establishment in the direction he wanted. Science is fuelled by money. Soon after the accident, he began working with the American Paralysis Association, a charity; by 1999, it had become the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation. He now leads the organization, which offers more than thirteen million dollars in grants each year. Reeve has used this power to change the way spinal-cord research is conducted.

One of the vexing problems in the field, he told me, is that few researchers use the same animal models or techniques. Some work on rats; others experiment on mice or cats. Some cut the spinal cord with a scalpel or microscissors; others crush the cord with metal weights. Thus, results often cannot be compared—or reproduced.

To remedy this, Reeve's foundation did two things. It assembled a working group of experts in the field and required that they collaborate rather than compete. "They have to share all the information, share the successes, share the failures," Reeve said. The foundation is also associated with the Reeve-Irvine Research Center, at the University of California, Irvine. Equipped with all available animal models, the laboratory is dedicated to doing comparative studies and reproducing data.

Reeve is not afraid of arguing with the scientists on his foundation board about their decisions. He recently pro-

ALL SOULS'

Starting up behind them,
all the voices of those they had named:
mink, gander, and marmoset,
crow and cockatiel.
Even the duck-billed platypus,
of late so quiet in its bed,
sent out a feeble cry signifying
grief and confusion, et cetera.

Of course the world had changed
for good. As it would from now on
every day, with every twitch and blink.
Now that change was de rigueur,
man would discover desire, then yearn
for what he would learn to call
distraction. This was the true loss.
And yet in that first

unchanging instant,
the two souls
standing outside the gates
(no more than a break in the hedge;
how had they missed it?) were not
thinking. Already the din was fading.
Before them, a silence
larger than all their ignorance

yawned, and this they walked into
until it was all they knew. In time
they hunkered down to business,
filling the world with sighs—
these anonymous, pompous creatures,
heads tilted as if straining
to make out the words to a song
played long ago, in a foreign land.

—*Rita Dove*

tested when he felt that a grant proposal was misguided. Some scientists think it is absurd that a layman can help determine funding decisions, but Reeve believes that he is simply making sure that scientists stay focussed on improving patients' lives. "I heard a very distinguished scientist say, 'You can never do enough basic science,' " he told me. "These are the kinds of people I'm no longer willing to fund. We used to fund this particular researcher, but we dropped him."

Even more controversial, Reeve believes that researchers need to stop being so timid about giving experimental therapies to humans. In the United States, a new therapy is typically tested on animals for years before it is tested on humans, and even then it is administered to a slowly growing group. Most scientists think that this approach protects patients, but Reeve believes that it often harms more than it helps—by slowing science to a crawl. In our conversation, he described how, in a commencement address at an Ivy League medical school, he had told the students the story of Hans Keirstead, a professor at Irvine. Keirstead, who was working with human embryonic stem cells, had designed a treatment protocol that shortened the three stages of a traditional clinical trial to two stages. "I said to the audience, 'This is how these young guys are thinking. This is a young scientist who really wants to make a difference. What he did was truly commendable,' " Reeve recalled. Afterward, he went on, "This tenured professor said to me, 'That is very disturbing. It's very upsetting, because that's rushing things, and if one mistake is made it could set the whole field back ten years.' "

Reeve replied, "It might be upsetting to you, because it's not the way you are used to thinking. But it's not upsetting to me as a patient. Because, let's face it, nothing of any significance has ever been achieved without reasonable risk."

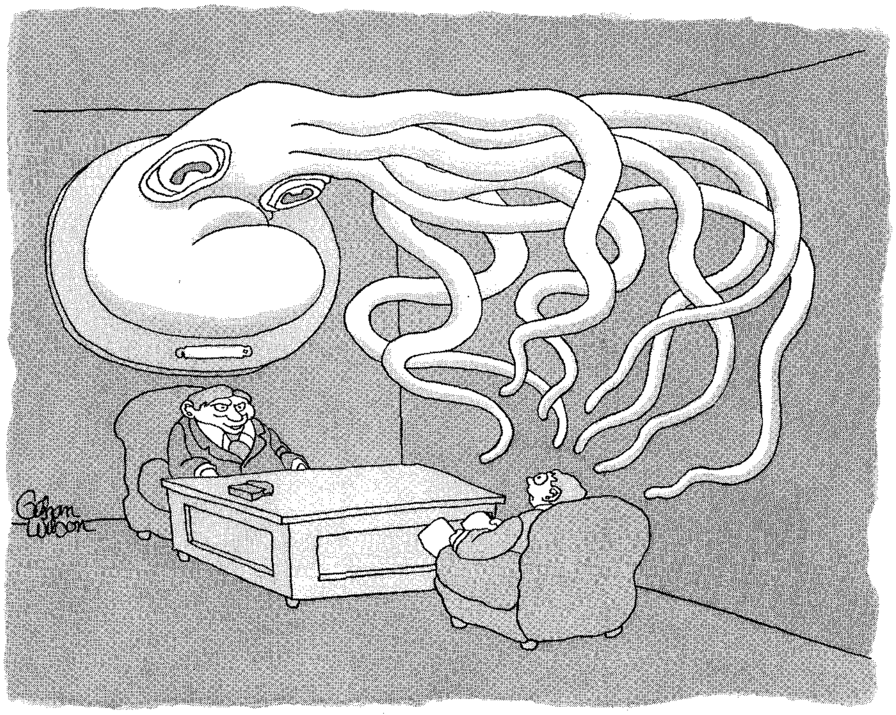
Although Reeve promotes risk-taking science, he is mindful of the need to protect a patient's safety, including his own. Throughout the late nineties, he was desperate to be freed of the ventilator. He worked to strengthen the muscles of his neck and shoulders through therapy, but it did little to allow him to expand his thorax and breathe without the machine. Around 1980, doctors began experimenting with a pacemaker that causes the diaphragm to contract. But implanting the pacemaker involved complex surgery that sometimes resulted in infection, and even death. Reeve decided that, in his case, the protocol was too dangerous.

Last February, he went to Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, in Cleveland, where the F.D.A. had approved a clinical trial of a next-generation pacemaker inserted via laparoscope—a much less traumatic procedure. Surgery was performed on Reeve, and it was a success. When I met with Reeve in June, he was on the ventilator fifteen hours a day; by October, he required it for only five hours a day. (He keeps his ventilator by his side at all times, in case the pacemaker malfunctions.)

One consequence of this procedure has to do with Reeve's sense of smell. Immediately after his accident, for reasons his doctors cannot explain, many ordinary odors struck Reeve as overpowering. One day at Kessler, he told me, Dana brought him some Chinese food, which he loves, and he had to insist that she take it away. "This is what it must be like to be a dog," he recalled saying. "Everything smells fifty times as intense." Over time, Reeve's sense of smell became less acute, almost vanishing. On the first day of the pacemaker's functioning, however, Reeve found that this sense had suddenly returned. "They put something under my nose," Reeve said, shifting to a stage whisper—a rare return to his old theatricality—"and I said, 'Coffee.' After coffee, it was an orange, and then peppermint."

I asked Reeve how he became the third person enrolled in the pacemaker experiment. "I applied early in 2002, and they said no," he said. "I was rejected from the study for more than a year. And the reason was that they didn't want to fail with somebody of my public profile." (Anthony DiMarco, the study's principal investigator, disputed this, but Raymond Onders, his co-investigator, said, "I can't deny that.") After the doctors practiced on one more patient, they agreed to test Reeve's fitness for the procedure. "I had to prove under fluoroscopy that my diaphragm moved in response to electrical stimulation of the phrenic nerve in order to qualify," he said. "And I passed with flying colors."

If the delay in his surgery had been related purely to safety concerns, Reeve would have been sympathetic. But the idea that career interests were involved made him angry. "I didn't take that very well," he said tersely. "It comes back to this underlying fear in the scientific



"Intimidating, isn't it?"

community of setbacks. What will it cost if they make a mistake? Not only the cost of institutional reputation but also the cost to the scientist's career."

Last month, I spoke with Hans Keirstead, the young researcher at the Reeve-Irvine Research Center. Keirstead has been working with the Geron Corporation, a California biotechnology company focussed on stem-cell research. In 2001, the Bush Administration forbade the National Institutes of Health to fund research on human embryonic stem cells, unless the stem-cell lines had been acquired prior to the ruling. Using one of these existing lines, Keirstead has developed methods that cause the stem cells to mature into a form of glial cell known as an oligodendrocyte. Glial cells nurture and support the nerves in the spinal cord.

To test how these cells might contribute to recovery from spinal-cord injury, Keirstead has developed an experiment with rats. He crushes each animal's spinal cord with a metal rod. Seven days after the injury, Keirstead transplants human embryonic stem cells that have matured into glial cells to the wounded area. He has found that rats that receive these glial cells can consistently support their weight and occasionally step forward. Injured rats that did not receive treatment could do neither.

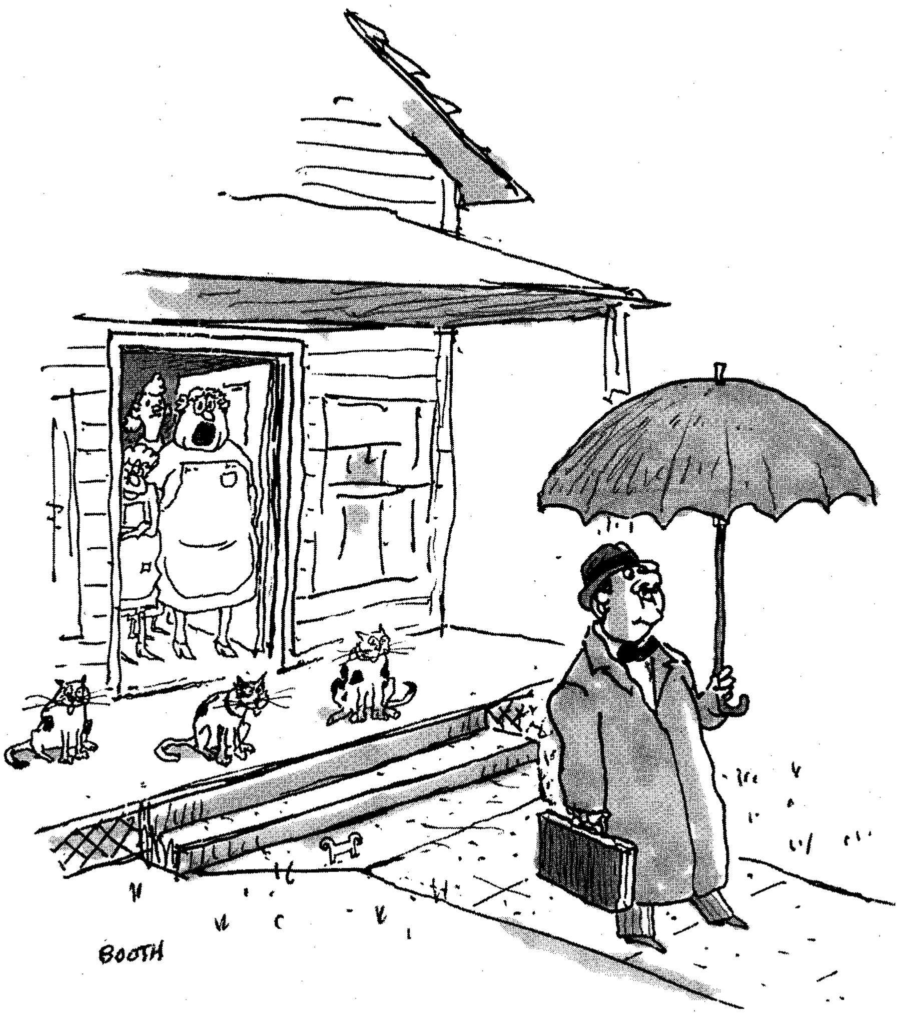
Reeve makes a point of visiting vanguard scientists like Keirstead. In recent years, his improved health has allowed him to stay in contact with researchers around the globe; last January, he attended a conference in Australia and was struck by the audacity of foreign scientists. "We are rapidly falling behind other countries," he told me. For example, a Spanish team is doing highly promising experiments involving glial cells that are found not in the spinal cord but in and around the nose. Olfactory nerves, which register smells, continually regenerate throughout adult life; they are the only nerves in the human body with this capacity for self-renewal. When the axons of nerves in the olfactory bulb are severed, fresh connections quickly regrow.

Dr. Almudena Ramón-Cueto, a researcher at the Spanish Council for Scientific Research, in Valencia, reported in 2000 that when rats with severed spinal cords had glial cells from their olfactory system implanted at the site of injury, the animals recovered markedly. Seven months after their spinal cords had been cut, all the rats who received the cells showed significant improvement in their ability to climb a small ramp. They also regained sensation, retracting a hind limb in response to light skin contact.

When researchers subsequently examined the site of injury, they found an opaque white tissue that bridged the separated spinal-cord stumps. The Spanish researchers suggest that the olfactory glial cells might wrap themselves around regenerating axons, protecting them from destructive molecules. After the Spanish group's paper was published, seven different laboratories performed studies confirming that olfactory glial cells facilitate spinal-cord regeneration.

Reeve is even more excited by the work of Dr. Hongyun Huang, a Chinese neurosurgeon. Huang, making a leap that Reeve applauds and others condemn, has injected olfactory glial cells into the spinal cords of nearly four hundred paralyzed patients, including three Americans. Huang obtained the glial cells from aborted human fetuses. (Such fetal-tissue research is banned in some U.S. states, and the Bush Administration supports a federal ban.)

The speed with which Huang has moved to clinical trials has stunned many in the West. Some scientists, such as Ramón-Cueto, think it is important to do more research first; she is determined to do primate trials of her method before proposing human studies. Given that scientists do not yet fully understand why glial-cell implantation works in rats, the F.D.A. would also likely have been wary of greenlighting Huang's study.



"Once you get some breakfast in him and send him off to work, he does make a fair-to-middling breadwinner."

Early results have been promising, however, and nobody appears to have been harmed. In October, Wise Young, the researcher at Rutgers, travelled to Beijing to examine Huang's patients. "I saw this with my own eyes," he told me. No one should view Huang's protocol as miraculous, Young said, "but it is bringing back sensation and some motor function." All the patients in Huang's study had chronic injuries, he said; on average, they had been paralyzed for two years. "One very puzzling thing is that many of the patients are recovering function within three to five days, which is too fast for regeneration," Young added. "There may be some other mechanism of recovery that we don't understand."

Since news of Huang's success leaked out on Internet discussion groups, thousands of desperate patients have contacted him. Huang has set up a program that allows Americans and other non-Chinese to visit Beijing for one month, for surgery and preliminary rehabilitation. The cost is twenty thousand dollars; six thousand people, Huang says, are now on a waiting list for the program.

Young, who has created a Web site, Sciwire.com, to dispel rumors overstating the promise of new methods, tells patients who ask about Huang's trial to wait for more data. "But there is no way you can talk these people out of doing it," he said. "You can tell them, 'Wait another year until the paper has come out' and 'Maybe he'll come to the States,' but they say, 'Hey, I don't want to wait three or four years to try this.' "

As an actor, Reeve was a political activist, involved in the Creative Coalition, which battled Jesse Helms and other opponents of the National Endowment for the Arts. He now petitions Congress to increase the budget of the National Institutes of Health and pushes for full federal funding of stem-cell research.

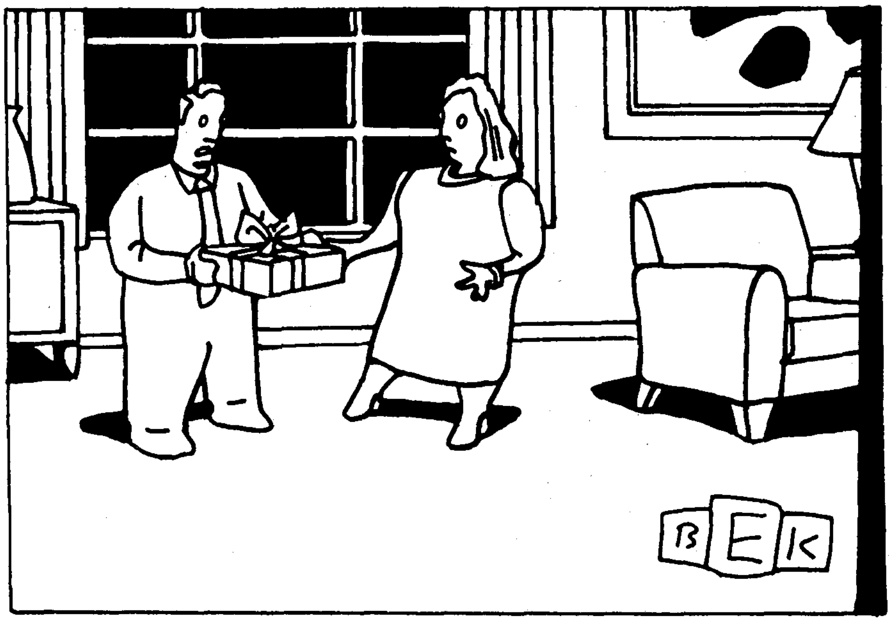
With George W. Bush in the White House, Reeve is unlikely to get his way. So he intends to bypass the federal government and get bills passed in states before the next Presidential election. "What we are working on at the foundation, which I believe is going to turn the tide, is a series of state initiatives," he told me. "The example was set by California last September, when the governor signed a bill that allows scientists to conduct research on stem cells from any source. That means umbilical cord, adult stem cells, embryonic stem cells left over from I.V.F. clinics." California offers millions in state grants for medical research. The New Jersey Senate recently passed a similar bill, Reeve noted. "It is awaiting passage in the Assembly. We think that can be accomplished. And, regardless of who is running for President, he wouldn't be able to do anything about it. Furthermore, one of the core Republican beliefs is states' rights."

Reeve's emerging strategy resembles that of a venture capitalist. He relentlessly networks with scientists to determine which laboratories are doing inventive work and which clinical trials have had tantalizing preliminary results. His foundation invests in research projects around the globe, some of them high risk. Although many investments may fail, one or two may yield major returns.

Not long ago, Reeve returned from a trip to Israel, where he visited the Weizmann Institute of Science. In a novel and controversial experiment, a specialized type of human blood cell is being implanted in the spinal cords of acutely injured patients within fourteen days of their accidents. "Things move much faster there," Reeve said. "We shouldn't have to go abroad to enter into experiments like this." He spoke feelingly about one man, an Israeli Arab, whose injury is similar to his own. After the treatment, the man was able to walk with the support of parallel bars.

I later spoke with Dr. Michal Schwartz, the scientist leading the project. She was encouraged by her early data, but she emphasized that the findings were preliminary and that no conclusions should be drawn from them. When I sat with Reeve in his office, however, he became so excited discussing such "pioneering research" that he spoke animatedly for four hours, and his rhetorical vigor and robust appearance made it impossible not to be caught up in his vision.

When I was first introduced to Reeve, I had placed my hand gently on top of his. At the end of the afternoon, I asked him if he had truly felt it. "Of course!" he said, surprised. Then he paused, and for the first time his voice was infused with emotion. The warmth of human skin, he said, was the sensation he valued most. "Feeling my children's touch again—that's been the most amazing thing." ♦



"If you don't like it you can always use it as another example of how I have no idea who you really are."

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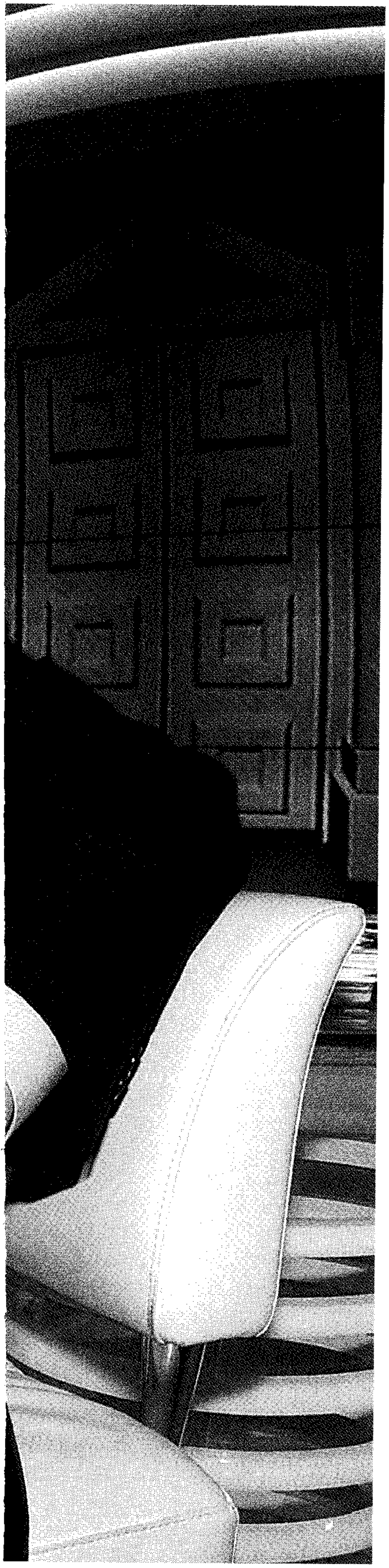
ROPI

Berlusconi has been on trial eight times in as many years. As Prime Minister, he has rewritten the law to protect himself



cution. Photograph by Marco Lanni.

LETTER FROM EUROPE

ALL HE SURVEYS

Silvio Berlusconi liked Italy so much he bought the country.

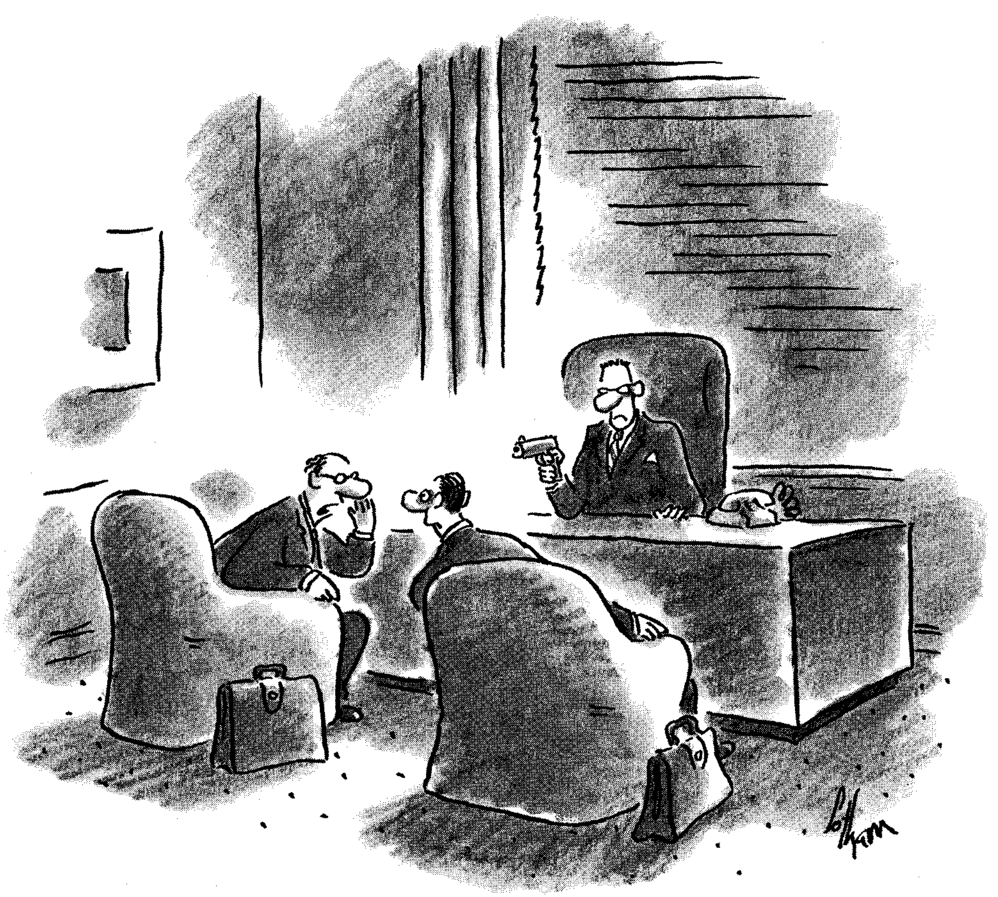
BY JANE KRAMER

Silvio Berlusconi is the Prime Minister of Italy, its first media mogul, and its richest citizen. Italians who like him—and obviously millions do—usually start with "rich." It's a word they pronounce with some reverence, because, for Berlusconi's admirers, having a leader who not only is spectacularly rich but, more to the point, came from nowhere, got rich before he got elected, and has managed to put the Italian state to work to guarantee his fortune amounts to a watershed in Italian history, something to command attention and respect, on the order of Dante or the Quattrocento. "The role of Berlusconi is to be rich—that's his job," the producer Carlo Freccero told me, about a year after he was replaced as the president of RAI-2, one of the country's three state television networks, for what could be called insufficient deference toward the Prime Minister.

Not everybody likes Silvio Berlusconi. He can be charming, courteous, and entertaining, but in his time he has been accused of many unpleasant things. Contempt for the law. Conflict of interest. Bribery. Money laundering. Plain corruption. Offhand displays of arrogance—Islam is an inferior civilization; Mussolini never killed anyone, just "sent people on holiday"—that in the retelling sound even more bizarre. Freccero says that if you love Silvio nothing about him matters but the dream of success that he's selling in his own person. And never mind if a dream called "Silvio Berlusconi" sells better in Italy than anywhere *outside* Italy, under the kind of scrutiny Berlusconi can't manage and the kind of ridicule he can't censor.

Berlusconi isn't simply the first mogul of the advertising and media age in Italy. He is the first to have grasped that whoever controlled its images of success could appropriate almost any amount of political power. Today, he monopolizes a huge share of the country's sources of information, which is also to say, its sources of manipulation. The list of media that he or his relatives or his proxies own, or directly or indirectly control, includes the state television networks and radio stations, three of Italy's four commercial television networks, two big publishing houses, two national newspapers, fifty magazines, the country's largest movie production-and-distribution company, and a chunk of its Internet services. That's more than fifty per cent of Italy's advertising market. Soon the list may be even longer, thanks to a draft law, now making committee rounds in parliament, that redefines the media to include a stockpot of new categories, from Web publications and publicity handouts to music and movies. If the law passes, Berlusconi's media holdings will fall well within a legal limit, and he will be able to purchase a couple of other newspapers that he apparently wants—*Corriere della Sera* being the most important and consequently the one he is said to covet. He has already done well by his close friend Rupert Murdoch; on July 31st, programming on nearly all the satellite hookups in Italy was switched automatically to Murdoch's Sky Italia.

Berlusconi's power over what other Italians see, read, buy, and, above all, think they think is overwhelming. And that's a fraction of his influence. At one time or another, the Prime Minister has laid siege to vast sectors of the Italian economy, among them debt financing, insurance, real estate, supermarkets, and sports. (The sports rundown, past and present, that Berlusconi gave me included not only AC Milan—one of Europe's most lucrative soccer teams and franchises—but also "a rugby team, a volleyball team, everything, in every sport, and I always won, everywhere, even ice hockey.") He is also the biggest employer in Italy. If you add the twenty-two thousand Italians he actually employs to those in the huge bureaucracies he directly or indirectly controls, you arrive at more than three million of the country's twenty-three million working



"I dread his sarcasm even more."

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people—and that's not counting the families of those people.

The state, in Italy, has never been independent of its politicians. Berlusconi didn't create the system. He inherited it, made it marginally less accountable than it was before, and lost it when his first coalition fell, in December of 1994, only eight months after he put it together. Given that no one then tried seriously to fix the system, it's not really surprising that, once he controlled it again—a couple of national elections, five governments, and six and a half years later—he felt free to make it worse. Ferruccio de Bortoli, who ran *Corriere* from 1997 until late last spring (when he came under such unnerving palace attack for his coverage of the Prime Minister that he was forced to resign), told me that, for him, the most significant difference between Italy when he took over the paper and Italy today, under Berlusconi, is that "the level of legality is lower now. We are the only country in Europe that suffers this anomaly." There are no blind trusts. No meaningful guidelines on conflict of interest. No culture of divestment. No legal reason for a Prime Minister even to consider divestment. "I wanted to do it," Berlusconi has said. "But my children won't let me."

Berlusconi was born in 1936, in an outlying Milan suburb, to a formidably dour mother called Rosella and a father, Luigi, who worked in a one-branch local bank that was later instrumental in getting the Prime Minister his first business loans. Berlusconi's 2001 campaign biography, "An Italian Story"—a hundred and twenty-eight pages of unremitting spin, mailed to every Italian family—follows Luigi's progress from bank clerk to general manager, gets him more or less honorably through the Second World War ("a horrendous tragedy that Silvio, and all his compatriots, have never been able to forget"), and turns Rosella into a heroine who, pregnant and alone, faces down the S.S. to save the life of a Jewish woman on a commuter train. Journalists who have tracked Berlusconi's financial history are often surprised to discover, in the end, how much of it is laid out proudly in the official literature. He began as a salesman. He made his first big money in the seventies, closing the development package for a four-thousand-unit office-hotel-and-apartment complex on an artificial lake outside Milan, which he'd been putting together for ten years and was modestly calling Milano 2. Within a few years, he was able to unload the central square of Milano 2—the commercial space, with the offices and the hotel. The money went to start his media empire: the advertising agency Publitalia, which is his linchpin company; Canale 5, his first national television station; and *Il Giornale*, his first newspaper.

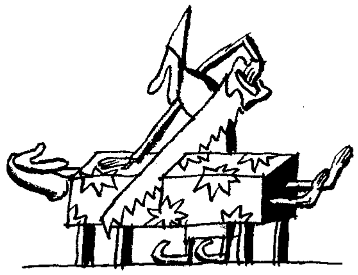
In the official literature, this extraordinary rise is transformed into Silvio's vision of making the world safe and free for Rosella. She is his fallback Italian mamma. She comes up in almost every conversation with the men in his inner circle, a woman of such improbable homilies that she could be June Allyson in a fifties weepy. ("If you feel it's your duty to do it, you must find the courage to follow your ideal," she supposedly told Silvio when, at the age of fifty-seven, he sought her advice on going into politics. "Gather your courage, your energy, your enthusiasm, and your faith.")

If the cliché is true that Italy's most enduring institutions—the Mafia and the Church being the obvious examples—owe their success to the prototype of a big, bossy Italian family, full of threats and pieties, then you have to look at Italy today as Rosella Berlusconi's legacy. The Berlusconis are the national soap opera, better than anything you can find on Berlusconi's own networks. There is his first wife, Carla dall'Oglio, who lives in quiet retreat in London and is famous for having never uttered a word about the twenty years they spent together. There are the two grown children. Marina—at thirty-seven, a vice-chairman at Fininvest, Berlusconi's domestic holding company—is also known for having produced a baby with a dancer at La Scala, whom she is said to have met through his male lover, a celebrated plastic surgeon. Piersilvio—at thirty-four, a vice-chairman at Mediaset, Berlusconi's domestic media conglomerate—is known mainly by the parties he goes to and the TV hostess draped on his arm.

It goes without saying that neither of them gets along with Veronica Lario, the second Mrs. Berlusconi, whom Silvio married in 1990, when the youngest of *their* children (two girls and a boy) was two. Lario's real name is Miriam Bartolini. She was born in Romagna, became an actress, and worked hard to "give dignity" to her life, as Berlusconi would say. He first spotted her performing in a play that was once memorably described as a "topless classic." By now, she seems to have outgrown him. "Well, I mostly see him on television," she said drily to a reporter who followed her out of a theatre near Piacenza one night this summer to ask if she ever actually *saw* Berlusconi anymore. It's doubtful that she wants to. She sent their older daughter to study with Massimo Cacciari, a Marxist philosopher who for eight years was the mayor of Venice and is now the dean of a philosophy institute in Milan. ("It seems an ideal situation," Lario has said.) Lario herself has become an unlikely icon of the Italian left, a state of affairs designed to drive her husband crazy—and perhaps it has. Last winter, when the Danish Prime Minister arrived in Rome on a state visit, Berlusconi introduced him to the local press as "Anders Rasmussen, the best-looking Prime Minister in Europe," and remarked that Rasmussen should really meet his wife, Veronica: he was so much handsomer than that Cacciari character whom people said poor Veronica was seeing.

A few months later, Lario spoke publicly for the first time in several years. She said that peace movements "wake up consciences," and then, not long after the invasion of Iraq started, she was quoted in an interview as saying that she was "not in favor of the war." (Whatever George Bush thinks, I agree, is what Berlusconi told anyone who asked.) Her career in sexy B-movies has now been upgraded to the level of the erotic avant-garde. Even Walter Veltroni, the mayor of Rome and a former Communist Party secretary, respectfully described the last movie she made before retiring as "a Lina Wertmüller film about a lesbian affair." It may be that people in the opposition have come to see Lario as emblematic of Italy's own troubled relationship with the Prime Minister, and the compromises it represents.

As everyone in Italy knows, a team of state prosecutors at the Milan courthouse have been pursuing the Prime Minister since the early nineties, on charges involving white-collar crimes that run a gamut from false accounting and tax fraud to the bribery of judges, politicians, and the financial police. Berlusconi has been on trial eight times in as many years, and has been found guilty three times. One of his convictions was overturned on appeal, and the others were expunged (along with the charges against him) when the statute of limitations kicked in. It's fair to say that not many people with a past like that, full of open secrets, and the cash to escape it, are going to be totally enthusiastic when it comes to the cause of a critical free press. Tana de Zulueta, an opposition senator who once wrote for *The Economist*, describes the problems in Italy's media this way: "Half the reporters work for Berlusconi, and the other half think they might have to." In television, virtually everybody in one way or another works for him already. (La 7, the only commercial network he doesn't own, accounts for less than ten per cent of the market.) Anyone watching the one-thirty news on RAI-1 on July 2nd—the day that Berlusconi, representing Italy, formally assumed the six-month rotating presidency of the European Union and delivered his first speech to the Strasbourg parliament—would not have known that something crucial was missing: Berlusconi's entire reply to a German deputy who'd just taken him to task for the ethical issues that his presence in the parliament was bound to raise. (He compared the deputy to a concentration-camp Kapo, so enraging the German Chancellor that he cancelled his Italian vacation and went home to Hanover instead.) What Italians got was footage of Berlusconi silently mouthing words and jabbing his finger, and a brief commentary to the effect that Germans had "attacked" him.



Italian state television has always been run by political appointees who have had to second-guess their masters. It was never interesting, but, in its allotment of opportunities for fawning, it was occasionally politically representative. It is much less so now. By late last year, the hand of the government had settled so heavily, and so clumsily, on the RAI networks that three of the five RAI board members had quit in protest. And serious RAI journalists were compiling a list of incidents of government interference in their assignments and their news broadcasts (it was never leaked or released) and complaining openly about the threat of being replaced, seriatim, by what you might call the Stepford Wives of Italian broadcasting. Even the old Stepford Wives were complaining. (One of them was so addled, trying to grasp the instructions coming in by teleprompter and earphone, that she wrote a long open letter to her boss, accusing him of insulting her "professional and human dignity.") Enrico Mentana, who anchors the nightly news on Berlusconi's Canale 5, and is the best journalist at any of the Mediaset networks, says that the choice in Italy now is "I'm Berlusconi's man" or "I'm Berlusconi's man."

As for foreign journalists, not many of them get in to see the Prime Minister. He rarely calls on them at press conferences. "They just use it as an opportunity to attack me," he says. Berlusconi has been avoiding foreign magazines and papers, and threatening to sue some of them, ever since the run-up to the 2001 elections, when the sales pitch that he likes to describe as "my ongoing encounter with the Italian people" was undermined, in the pages of *The Economist*, by a report entitled "Fit to Run Italy?" (The conclusion was no.) The reports have continued, and in August this year Bill Emmott, the *Economist's* editor, was asked why a British magazine was devoting so much space to an Italian Prime Minister. He replied that Berlusconi had betrayed the two things the magazine stood for: capitalism and democracy.

I managed to see Berlusconi, after months of trying, only through a mutual friend. (I had no luck trying to send a photographer.) He doles out access the way he doles out business favors, on the basis of whom you know. Reporters who cross him—which is to say, reporters who are critical, or skeptical, or simply more constrained by reality than he is—are known in his circle as "Communists" or "snobs" or "people with the Anglo-Saxon habit." Fedele Confalonieri, his oldest friend and the chairman of Mediaset, described those people to me—I detected no irony—as having inapplicably high standards, or, as he put it, "coming on like Rudyard Kipling in India" and "taking up the white man's burden" in what was, after all, "a different world." But the truth is that Italy isn't a different world—not anymore. Italy is Europe, and the standards apply, and, in the event, a free press, like a free economy, is part of the European charter that Italy signed, and against which every new applicant to the European Union is measured.

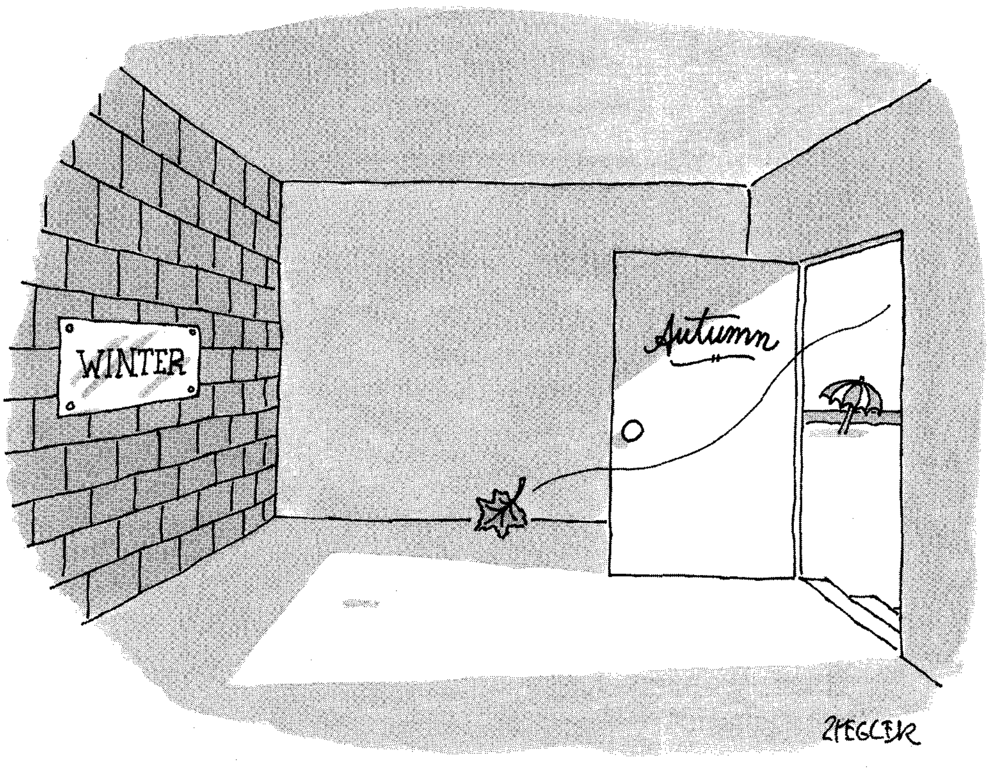
At a dinner party in Italy some weeks ago, I watched one of the country's most equable statesmen blow up between the soup and the salmon and start lecturing the table about leftist conspiracies in the foreign press and how everyone was attacking Berlusconi, when he hadn't done anything different from any other Italian businessman or politician or, for that matter, any other European one. "Why don't you write about what Kohl did, what Chirac did?" he said suddenly, turning to me. I told him that that wasn't the point, really. The point, I realized, was that not many people in France or Germany today would have expected me, or any other reporter, not to.

Berlusconi's feelings about dissent were obvious from the start, though perhaps more comical than grave until the summer after his reëlection, when he smiled through a G-8 summit at the ducal palace, in Genoa, while only a few blocks away riot police and carabinieri took on a couple of hundred thousand young demonstrators in a display of military high theatrics and hysterical brutality such as hadn't been seen in Italy for decades. (In the most egregious attack, police stormed a school where demonstrators were sleeping, dragged them off to the stationhouse jail, and slammed their heads against the wall to choruses of a Fascist marching song.) The toll, after three days of demonstrations, was one dead and hundreds in the hospital.

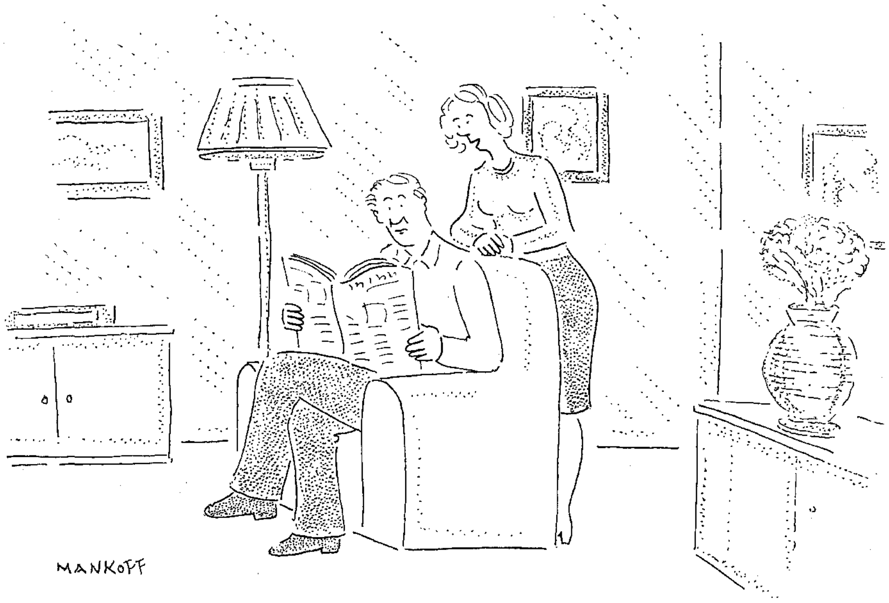
As for business principles, Berlusconi talked endlessly about the free market, but when he said "free" he may have meant "free for me," since in the past he had lobbied so hard and paid so heavily to lock out the competition. His success was due, in part, to his cultivation of Bettino Craxi, the Socialist Prime Minister who, in 1984, signed off on a spectacularly crafty decree that created private national television networks, just for him, on a legal technicality involving nanoseconds of difference in local transmission times.

Berlusconi says that he would never have run for office if it hadn't been for the "conspiracy"—he meant the judicial sweep—that the rest of Italy calls Mani Pulite, or Clean Hands. It was the early nineties. Craxi, charged with graft and corruption, fled to Tunisia. And nine hundred politicians, bureaucrats, and businessmen were indicted and awaiting trial, some of them locked up in a filthy Milan jail called San Vittore, known for its population of thieves, terrorists, and drug dealers. By 1994, with nearly every important Socialist and Christian Democrat in Italy publicly involved in some sort of corruption scandal, the country's old party system had completely collapsed. Berlusconi, like most big businessmen, was left without a patron. When he couldn't find anyone as flexible as Craxi—and, in fact, he tried—he "offered" himself to Italy. He invented a new party; named it Forza Italia, after a soccer cheer; and picked two hundred and sixty-seven candidates, from a list of employees, recommendations, and friends, to run for parliament in national elections that were only a couple of months away. He said that he was going to save the country from Communists. It's a mark of his undeniably extravagant talent that he managed to revive the Cold War in Italy five years after the Wall came down, and three years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the official transformation of Italy's own Communist Party into the Democratic Party of the Left, or P.D.S.

Berlusconi likes to say that the critical moral influence on his life, after Rosella, was the Salesian Brothers who ran his grade school and took in some runaway Russian priests who told him stories about what he knew, even then, was "the most inhumane undertaking in the history of the world." The night we met, in Rome last fall—at Palazzo Grazioli, the seventeenth-century palace where he "gets away" from his



official residence and office, five blocks north, at Palazzo Chigi—he told me that his anti-Communist crusade began with those Russian priests. He showed me a speech he'd written on "the Communist phenomenon," and then he turned down the page in a book of his "improvised" speeches, so that I wouldn't miss it. (I left the palace with the speeches, and with a collection of what he called the "speeches I write in advance.") "Look here," he said. "Look at this one! I'll mark it. . . . There is a whole speech, all improvised—it was an evening when I was reasoning well. Read here, how I give an essential picture of the history of Communism. There's also another nice speech in the first volume—the one here—a speech for youth on the subject of democracy and freedom. You'll see how different it is from what the other leaders do."



"You know, lately I've been fantasizing about having a twosome."

Washington loved the idea of a leader who was against Communism and for democracy, freedom, and the market. Bill Clinton bought, if not precisely into Berlusconi, then into the idea of Berlusconi, much encouraged by the old cold warriors of Foggy Bottom, and by his Ambassador in Italy, a tough career diplomat who took the self-made Silvio and his pitch entirely to heart (and who is now back in Rome, as an investment banker). So, of course, did American business. Edith Wharton once wrote that for the American male "the real *crime passionnel* is a 'big steal,' " and, in that respect, you could say that Berlusconi was someone recognizably American. He made the perfect ally, doting, as he did, on all manifestations of Americanness, including the famous energy (a quality notably lacking, before him, in Italian politics) and the mega-deals and the high stakes and the past and future enemies and the past, present, and future Presidents.

"In the end, I was—and the word is 'forced' by the people," Berlusconi told me, by way of explaining his first incursion into electoral politics. It was a little after nine. We had just sat down to dinner. He had already put in a very long day in parliament, but for the next few hours he sustained a monologue of almost inspiring self-invention—his welcome gracious, his attention tender, his fettuccine slathered with white truffles, and his *tagliata* of Chianina beef sliced to the melting transparency of sushi—oblivious of any questions that might disrupt the evening with reality. It was hard to dislike him. Nothing I'd read or seen or heard had prepared me for the full Silvio treatment: a modern European Prime Minister out of a Goldoni farce; a politician who flaunted outrageousness like a weapon and said anything that came into his head. (He told me later that he had "eliminated poverty for two million people" by raising their social-security pensions by what I learned was about fifty dollars a month.) When I asked him something about the trompe-l'oeil caryatids holding up his drawing-room ceiling—I'd arrived early, and for a few minutes it was either the ceiling or the latest Berlusconi magazines, spread out on a big black marble coffee table in a display of flesh worthy of the kiosk at the Frankfurt train station—he replied by reciting the exact number of palaces, monuments, museums, "art objects," national treasures, and rare antiques to be found in Italy. I took it on faith that the numbers were accurate.

"People came to me by the thousand, to my windows, to my house," he said at dinner, continuing the story of why he'd offered himself to Italy. "And they kept asking me to run. And inasmuch as I was the only Italian with a popularity higher than ninety per cent" (he owns a polling company) "and was popular even among the people of the left" (the left hates him) "and was someone who could represent a political alternative for those electors who did not want to vote for the left and for the Communists" (they were now the *former* Communists of the P.D.S.), "I told myself, 'I have to do this, to dignify the voters' past and to give them hope for the future.' . . . I quit everything." (He relinquished his titles but not his stake.) "I left my managers and my children to run my companies." (Perhaps they talk.) "And I founded a party, won the elections, and became Prime Minister, all in two months, two months. I did it because it was necessary for my country." In the end, it probably didn't matter why, because it was only a question of time before he was placed under criminal investigation. The charges against him involved Fininvest executives bribing tax officials on his behalf and, presumably, on his orders, and he received word of the investigation in what was considered one of the coups de théâtre of Mani Pulite. He was notified publicly, on November 22, 1994, in the middle of a United Nations summit he was hosting, in Naples, on the subject of organized crime. On December 22nd, the government fell, and he was out of office.

Today, Mani Pulite is old news—which is to say that you would be hard put to hear it discussed on Italian television. And, despite the occasional promises of the five governments that came and went, *all'italiana*, in the years between Berlusconi's brief first term and his return to office—promises to do something about passing antitrust laws or conflict-of-interest laws or divestment laws or media laws or whatever laws were necessary to control him—he is more powerful than ever. He maintains that in looking so well after his own interests he is looking after Italy's interests, and the Italians who vote for him believe him. The Italians who fear him believe that his interests are quickly turning the sixth-richest industrialized nation in the world into a company town—a kind of upscale Wigan Pier, with pasta.

Perhaps the only people in Italy whose assessment of the Prime Minister is rational are the dons in Sicily (where all of the sixty-one electoral constituencies went to his coalition), who were hoping that the judicial reforms Berlusconi was promising would serve them as nicely as they've since served him. They have been disappointed. The most Berlusconi has done for Sicily in two and a half years in office is to announce plans for the construction of a two-mile bridge, the longest suspension bridge in the world, that would link Messina to the mainland—a fantastical promise, when you consider that to build and service a bridge like that you need a real highway, and the only highway south from Naples is a two-lane road that was never modernized or widened, its budget stripped by the various Mafias holding the construction contracts.

The list of things that have not changed in Italy, let alone in Sicily, since Berlusconi took office is so long now that people have started to write them down, just to remember them all. His "Contract with the Italian People," a spinoff of Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America," has basically gone by the board. His campaign promises have not been kept. The laws that were going to save him from a couple of Milan prosecutors have not done anything for all the Italians who are still waiting for up to eleven years to see even their simplest cases settled. The RAI networks have not been granted independent charters, let alone privatized. The state has been neither trimmed nor reorganized. Its budget has risen. Its deficit is rising. Its services have not devolved to the regions. The "great public works" that Berlusconi promised—like the bridge, like the "epochal in scale" dike with which he's going to save Venice from the sea—are on hold for what the left claims is the worst Italian recession in forty years. The future of Italy's schools, its health, its science, and its environment was tabled while Berlusconi solved his problems, and now there is no money for anybody else's problems.

Not many Italians would deny that businessmen have had to bribe politicians, judges, bureaucrats, policemen, mobsters, and tax inspectors in order to go quietly about their business, or that the big parties have extorted money from those businessmen in order to meet their own payrolls. For years, the Christian Democrats controlled most of the banking and much of the bureaucracy south of Rome, collected votes, en bloc, through the Mob and the parish church, and got their pocket money from the United States. The Communist Party, in turn, controlled most of the coöperative farms and much of the agricultural credit in the Po Valley and Tuscany, collected votes, en bloc, from the biggest union in Italy, and got its pocket money from the Soviet Union. But the fact that for those same years the Communists were the second-largest party in conservative, Cold War, Christian Democratic Italy—the Party that people called "Euro-Communist," to show that it wasn't sinister, like the Parties in France and Germany and Britain—suggests that its success had something to do with its being the party of Antonio Gramsci, and of the Italian Resistance, and of mandatory education, and of a small measure of liberty for millions of peasants who after the war were still living under feudal sharecropping laws and, in some places, still sending their brides to the castle to be deflowered by the local count.

Today, the Italian left is fractured. There are seven parties and collections of parties making up the center-left opposition—a number that leads some Italians to ask if the problem for a postwar democratic left in Italy was not the presence of Communists so much as the absence of real Socialists and Social Democrats. Italy's Socialist Party was homegrown, born and nurtured in the great social turmoil of the Risorgimento, in the nineteenth century, and so brutally targeted by Mussolini in the twentieth that, without a Moscow or a Washington to support it, the old Party didn't really survive the war.

It was Craxi's genius to take the name and the symbol of a red carnation, which were treasured in the big cities of the north, and use them to revive the Socialists as a European liberal party, or, if you prefer, a wet welfare-state capitalist liberal party—something for the sixties radicals who would be growing up and getting married and getting ambitious and, maybe, missing the buzz of attention, not to mention for a couple of million middle-class *emergenti* who were going to be hungry for their own piece of the Italian pie. That's where businessmen like Berlusconi came in. He could sell anything. In time, he had the wherewithal to buy anyone. (Prosecutors claim that in 1991 nearly seven million dollars went from just one offshore Berlusconi company into an assortment of Craxi bank accounts in Switzerland. Berlusconi denied it, and, after being charged, tried, and convicted, he appealed and was covered by the statute of limitations.) But when the time came for him to enter politics he did it as an entrepreneur who stood almost entirely outside the system he supported, and, to many Italians, that made him clean. In Rome, I started asking Forza Italia voters why they liked him. A lot of them said, "Because he doesn't need the money!"

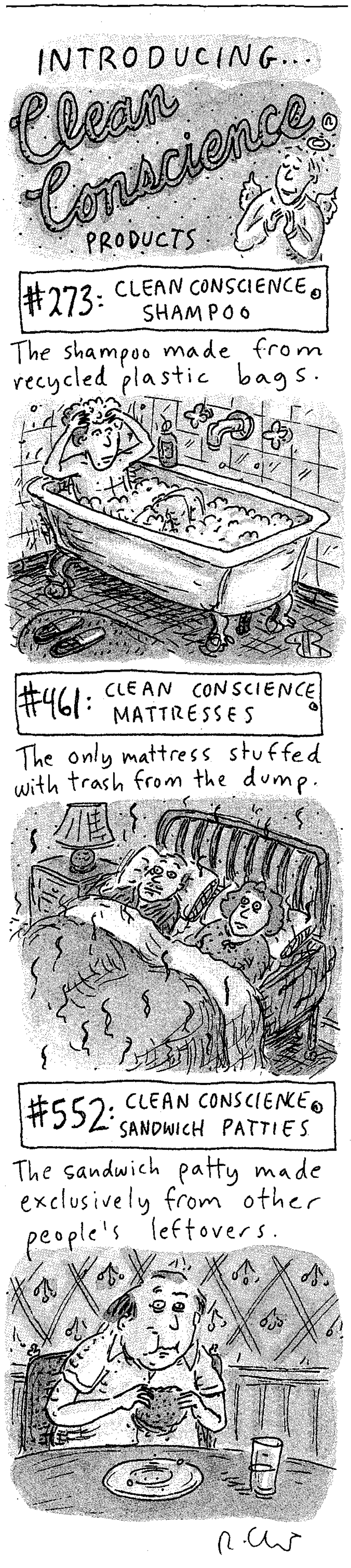
Berlusconi's friend Confalonieri says that he tried to talk the Prime Minister out of running, knowing he was going to be attacked "as if he'd seized his success" by force. "He has his moments of paranoia, like every successful man," Confalonieri told me. "He's certainly not an intellectual. He's a simplifier. He has no subtlety at all. And when he has to deal with those prosecutors! They're not Communists, of course, but they are using—I won't say 'Communist' tactics." Confalonieri was talking about Berlusconi's unfortunate tendency to refer to the Milan prosecutors (there are ninety-two), and often to the *magistratura* in general, as "Communists"—that is, when he isn't calling them "mentally disturbed," "mad twice over," or "anthropologically different." (He did this in September, in Sardinia, later blaming the heat and "our second bottle of champagne" and prompting one of the two reporters who'd been there to write that Silvio hadn't drunk anything, and that, in any case, all he had offered his guests was "a gallon of ice tea," with lemon.) Confalonieri wanted me to know that none of this mattered when you looked at the "big picture" that was Italy and saw that Berlusconi was right about having saved the country from a revolution. "Not a revolution in the old Communist sense but in the *dirigiste* sense," he said. Berlusconi had promised Italy something that Confalonieri called "enlightenment"—liberation from the populisms of Communism and Catholicism is the way he put it, perhaps borrowing that fashionable thought from the historian Paul Ginsborg—and that Freccero had described to me earlier as "Paradise Now!" And never mind if paradise was something you bought at the supermarket or, indeed, if Berlusconi owned them both.

Confalonieri and Berlusconi have been friends since they were students working the summer cruise circuit, with Confalonieri at the piano and Berlusconi crooning "like Frank Sinatra." And when Berlusconi has friends as constant as that he not only hires them but makes them rich, stands by them, and sometimes even saves them a place in the mausoleum he has built for himself and his family on the grounds of a villa he owns in Arcore, fifteen miles outside Milan. But those friends have very little in common besides constancy. Not many people I asked could even tell me if his closest adviser, Gianni Letta, belonged to Forza Italia, and Letta is the one man in Italy whom Berlusconi is said to defer to. Letta is always with him, working late, slipping into the palace quietly (as he did at about eleven on the night I ate there) to wait for the Prime Minister to get up and finish something they left off earlier. He is as Catholic as Confalonieri is anti-clerical. His political roots are Christian Democratic (though his friendships extend to the children of the old Communist intelligentsia). He is known as a man of exquisite discretion and finesse, despite the fact that he put in years as the editor of a national newspaper, as the moderator of a political television talk show, and as the deputy chairman of Fininvest before following Berlusconi to Palazzo Chigi, in 1994, and settling into the role of éminence grise. (Berlusconi, who calls Letta "my personal ambassador," has dispatched him to settle everything from strikes to soccer contracts.) The first question you hear in Rome is: What is nice Gianni Letta doing with Silvio Berlusconi? And the most frequent answer, after the obvious one that he likes Berlusconi, is that Letta is taking the long view, looking to the future of the Church and the state and all the other institutions that Italy has produced to discipline its irascibly wayward character. It's a deeply conservative view, whatever the high-tech, high-finance, Heaven-can't-wait new world that Berlusconi sells, because it's based on the conviction that Italians are "different," that Italians will never change—that the best you can do for Italians is to shepherd them through their fatal cycles of repetition.

Berlusconi's old friend and potential tomb-mate Marcello dell'Utri, an Opus Dei organizer and former real-estate developer (who is currently on trial in Palermo for collusion with the Mafia), once told me that, for him, the Prime Minister's singular achievement was to have collected such a disparate group of Italians as the ones in his government and to have used them as "components" of a political building block whose common ideology is Silvio Berlusconi and the "extraordinary frenzy" of open-ended activity he ignites. Dell'Utri's judgment isn't always to be considered sound. But the day I saw him—he was receiving in his office, under a large Kokoschka drawing of Ezra Pound—he came as close to describing Berlusconi's political success as Confalonieri had, with his images of the Prime Minister tilting at the snorting dragons of Communism and the Church in the name of an Italian enlightenment.

The truth is that there's not so much something for everyone in Berlusconi's government as someone for everything. Not many of the Forza Italia deputies, who signed on for what was going to be "the end of politics" in Italy, seem to have much idea what they're offering their constituents except that they work with Silvio Berlusconi. Certainly, there's not even a pretense to a political culture in Forza Italia. The Party is still mainly a campaign-poster construct, a way to identify the offices that Berlusconi opens before local and regional elections and that are then turned over to the experts at Publitalia to promote the candidates he still chooses. Nobody really knows how many members Forza Italia has. It wasn't intended for members.

There has been only one attempt to hold a national Party congress, and by all accounts that was a disaster. Nobody at the congress had any idea what to do or say, because there were no delegates to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R. Chast

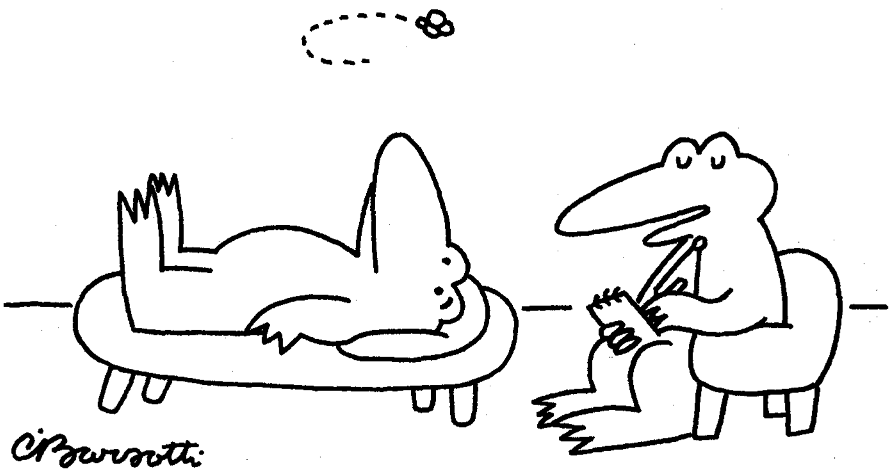
elect, no statements to vote on, not even any real rivals slugging it out for the job of Party secretary or negotiating for a shot at the Party platform. There is no platform committee at Forza Italia. "Everything is Silvio," one Forza Italia councilman I met in Rome said, and even Berlusconi sounded a little weary when he talked about the amount of time he was forced to spend at rallies where the most interesting thing that happens is that "all the people want to touch me," making it impossible for him to leave. But, as the councilman put it, "when Silvio doesn't show, we lose."

A month after the 2001 elections, the deputies in Berlusconi's coalition—he calls it the House of Liberties—installed a Milan defense lawyer and new Forza Italia deputy named Gaetano Pecorella as chairman of the Justice Commission of the Italian House of Deputies. Pecorella, it was pretty much assumed, was there to make Italy's punishments fit Italy's crimes by making laws that Berlusconi and his entourage would find more tolerable than the ones that were costing them so much time, money, and embarrassment. Pecorella kept on practicing law in Milan. It wasn't prohibited, and—since in Italian politics anything not specifically prohibited is embraced—after a decent interval he was, in his words, "invited" onto a team of lawyers permanently retained by the Prime Minister to exhaust his prosecutors and forestall his trials until the new laws were passed. (Pecorella's view of his own conflict of interest, at least as he put it to me, was: "It's a continuation of my liberal path." He said that Rome was mornings, Milan was afternoons.) The result of this tireless commute has been that, while Pecorella and his legal partners were busy prolonging the Prime Minister's most recent trial—at one point, they presented the court with a list of eighteen hundred defense witnesses to schedule—Pecorella and his parliamentary partners were devoting themselves almost exclusively to exempting the Prime Minister from the fruits of his old indiscretions and to cancelling any new ones he might commit. In the countdown to Italy's European presidency, parliament downgraded the kinds of financial crimes that Berlusconi was most often accused of committing (double bookkeeping, for one) to the level of misdemeanors, which also reduced the statute of limitations on those crimes; made it almost impossible for Italian prosecutors to introduce copies of foreign documents into evidence; and gave Berlusconi and his friends at least the possibility of requesting trials in courts that were more congenial than the one in Milan that usually indicts them.

But it was a slow and unexpectedly public process, with Berlusconi scheduled to take over at the E.U. at the same time his trial was heading toward a verdict. The charges against him came down to an accusation that, in the late eighties, he had bribed two judges to stop the sale of a state food conglomerate called SME to Carlo De Benedetti, who is now the co-owner of *La Repubblica* and *L'Espresso*, and who was even then one of Berlusconi's most bitter and embattled rivals. The evidence seemed solid, given that the man accused of being Berlusconi's bagman had just been sentenced to eleven years in jail in a similar case involving the Prime Minister. And the court was said to have records that put the cuts and payoffs of the various middlemen somewhere in the neighborhood of five hundred thousand dollars. Two weeks before Berlusconi's speech to the Strasbourg parliament, his own parliament came through with a law that saved him. He is now, like many other European leaders, immune from prosecution for as long as his government stands. The next national elections are two and a half years away.

One thing was always clear: whatever happened, Berlusconi wasn't planning to step down. And by now he has managed to hold together the second-longest-lasting government in postwar Italian history—two years, four months, twenty-two days. (The record belongs to Craxi, with two back-to-back governments, lasting a total of three and a half years, in the nineteen-eighties.) It's a fact that comes up often in Berlusconi's conversation. "Before, the Italian Prime Minister would change every ten or eleven months," he told me, either making a slight revision in the first of his two terms or ignoring the six years between them, "and there was no possibility for him to build personal relationships with other Presidents or Prime Ministers." For the moment, he's coasting. But, at sixty-seven, he is overweight, visibly under strain (he had prostate cancer in the late nineties), and still astonishingly ill-advised about his image

"I'm looking for a man who doesn't want anything to do with the wedding planning."



"That's my lunch."

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in the world. He wears what has been described as a rictus smile—either to control his temper, as is sometimes said, or to appear at all times nice—and an orange tan in order to look *sportivo*, and a wardrobe of ruthlessly tailored Caraceni suits whose jackets he never unbuttons, not even during heat waves. His political image is, if anything, worse. The House of Liberties includes not only the ex-Fascists of the National Alliance, whose leader, Gianfranco Fini, is the Deputy Prime Minister, but also the secessionists of Umberto Bossi's Northern League, some of whom still believe in a mythical "white" Italy called La Padania, where immigration would be forbidden and Italians from Rome and points south would have to carry passports. They are in fact much closer to Jörg Haider's Austrian Freedom Party than to anyone else in Italy, the difference being that Austria, with only eight million people, little industry, and none of Italy's economic clout, was put under E.U. sanctions for seven months after Haider's party entered a government. Berlusconi doesn't mind. Nobody else on the right has the votes to pull together a majority. Bossi doesn't really acknowledge half of Italy, though it's worth noting that, having walked out of the first Berlusconi government, he was strong enough this time around to negotiate two of the most important ministries in the new cabinet and the new directorship of RAI-2. As for Fini, it's possible that most Italians would reject him, given his political roots and the fact that, while he has renounced those roots, few others in his party seem ready to do the same.

Berlusconi likes to tell people that "there's a great friendship among all the members" of his government. "I still meet Bossi for dinner every Monday evening" is how he put it to me. And though he did smile wanly when he said it, a moment later, in what was as close as he came that night to a wistful statement, he added, "In business, it was only me who decided. I'd listen to everyone, and even spend the night staring at the ceiling, wondering what to do. But by morning I'd have made my decision, and everybody followed me."

It could be that, for Berlusconi, running a coalition like his is simply another part of the official success story, along with the trials, the three hundred judicial warrants (typically, he claims five hundred), the twenty-three holding companies he reportedly once registered as "beauty parlors," the innumerable estates (one, in Sardinia, with four hundred species of rare cactus), the palaces, and the cook, Michele, who is said to have once served monogrammed rolls to the guests at a dinner party. Class is a punishing divide in Italy. Ilda Boccassini, the lead prosecutor in the Prime Minister's most recent trial, often wore a string of fat pearls on the days that the defense called witnesses. This was something Italians noticed, the way they noticed when Gianni Agnelli, the late Fiat chairman, referred to Berlusconi not by name but as "the guy with the pancake makeup." The guy with the pancake makeup is now a few billion dollars ahead of Agnelli at his richest. He's the guy with the impressive if entirely meaningless "life title" of Il Cavaliere.

Perhaps the problem with Berlusconi is less what *he* wants than the fact that so many ordinary Italians—impressionable, ambitious, unworldly, insecure, and spectacularly resentful—still want him, because the Prime Minister has been a bellwether, not so much of late-capitalist democracy or of post-capitalist democracy as of what the anthropologist Mariella Pandolfi calls "virtual democracy." Pandolfi says that, for her, the great irony of Italian politics is that all the likely candidates of the center-left—Romano Prodi, say, who, as Prime Minister for two years in the late nineties, deftly steered Italy toward the euro, and who is now president of the European Commission—speak an Italian that's elegant but often completely incomprehensible and élitist. "It's the language of the priests, the courts, the language of authority," she told me, "whereas the language that unites Italy today is Berlusconi's television language. His grammar is dreadful. He gets the subjunctive wrong. Give him three seconds on television and he makes four mistakes. But you discover that everybody loves his mistakes. That's his power." Once, a reporter asked Berlusconi what he thought of the man who was then the president of Italy's biggest union, a soft-spoken and famously cultivated Cremonese worker named Sergio Cofferati, who had started out as a technician at Pirelli, the tire- and cable-maker, and now, twenty years later, was one of the men most often mentioned as a center-left candidate for Berlusconi's job. Berlusconi said, on television, in his usual friendly way, "Cofferati is always welcome. I'm going to invite him to dinner." But when Cofferati was asked to reply, he said, "I'm sorry, that would be agreeing to be *il convitato di pietra*." It was a reference to the fatal dinner in the last scene of "Don Giovanni," and it was much compared, in the opposition press, to a statement Berlusconi had made that contained a reference to race-car drivers. One Italian I know, calling to repeat the story, suggested that the Communists had now replaced the dusty *salotto* of Italy's "good families" as the source of real or imagined slights and snobberies against the new rich looking for *their* parlor in the House of Liberties.

What's clear to Italian intellectuals is

"Play the old Winston jingle."

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that the left has failed—not only in its unwillingness to do anything to stop Berlusconi during its six years in power but even in finding the language to take credit for its achievements. Europe. The euro. Cutting Italy's deficit without dismantling its net of services. "It was a conquest, and they had no idea how to capitalize on it," Pandolfi said. "Berlusconi could go on television and say anything at all and it erased everything they did." The economist Michele Salvati, comparing Spain and Italy since the end of Fascism, put it this way: How has Spain, where Franco held absolute power until 1975, been able to produce and sustain a stable, even thriving democracy, while Italy, free since the nineteen-forties, remains a client state of some of its own worst people? Berlusconi seized the imagination of Italy as a man of change. But, as long as his defense is, put simply, "Everybody does bad things, why can't I?" he's not much more than a new face in an old crowd.

Most Europeans have few illusions about Berlusconi. His near-monopolies threaten them. His prosecutors talk to theirs. His conflicts of interest mock the E.U. charter. Even the ten years he spent on the periphery of the construction business, putting together Milano 2, continue to taunt them, twenty-five years later. Those Europeans who still pursue Berlusconi tend to use him, and not always for purely financial reasons. The Spanish Prime Minister, José María Aznar, is a deeply conservative Catholic, who approves of Berlusconi's laissez-faire attitude on matters of church and state at least as much as he does on matters having to do with European business. Vladimir Putin, who wants Europe more than Europe wants him, dallies with Berlusconi in part because he's amused by the show, and in part because his two daughters would rather spend their summer holidays in Sardinia, at Villa Certosa (the one with the cactuses), than anywhere else east of the Hamptons. Tony Blair keeps the faith pragmatically, because Italy's good graces have translated into airspace and base space and refuelling stops during three wars in not much more than a decade. No one seriously expected Berlusconi to deploy an army in Iraq, or even try to. (The troops he sent to Afghanistan arrived after the fighting stopped.) This summer, he dispatched a company of peacekeepers, but during the invasion itself his most public gesture was to expel four minor Iraqi diplomats. He let the head of Iraq's diplomatic delegation stay. (Before the invasion, three million Italians were out on the streets with peace flags.)

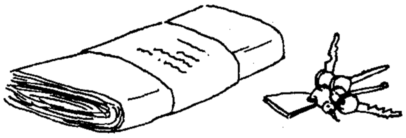
It has to be said that Berlusconi asks very little of his foreign colleagues. He wants to be included. He wants Italians to see him being included. He wants an exchange of hugs and smiles with the important heads of state, something for the photographers and cameramen who travel with him to document his social triumphs. He wants people to see that his teeth are dazzling and his jawline etched against the "blue sky and promising clouds" of what I'm told is his "travelling backdrop." (My favorite picture, after the one I saw in a German paper of Muammar Qaddafi presenting the Prime Minister with a bolt-action rifle, has George Bush squinting into his big bright teeth as if they had started flashing hieroglyphs.) Bush calls him "my friend Silvio Berlusconi," and even invited him to his ranch in Crawford, Texas, this summer, a piece of news that was broadcast over and over on Italian television, lest anyone forget that the only other world leaders ever to be honored with that exclusive invitation were the Presidents of Russia and China, the Prime Ministers of Britain, Australia, and Spain, and the Saudi Arabian crown prince. (In Texas, the new president of Europe was so eager to ingratiate himself with his American friend that he neglected to mention any European issue—not even one—during their brief press conference. The occasion, or maybe it was the July heat, had left him practically speechless.) For a time, Berlusconi was even thinking about a ranch of his own. The fact that he can easily buy one goes a long way toward explaining the promise of sweet revenge he represents for so many Italians, however preening he may often seem.

Nine years ago, most leaders in Europe were as happy to oblige Berlusconi as Bush is now. Today, with war on their minds, not to mention reputations to salvage, they tend to avoid him on all but ceremonial occasions, as Blair, Gerhard Schröder, and Jacques Chirac did when they met "informally"—the code for "without Silvio"—in Berlin this September to discuss Iraq. Berlusconi can be thick-skinned when it comes to the people he wants to please; he remains relentlessly friendly. "For Berlusconi to have guys like Putin, Bush, and Chirac together in his home, that's the most beautiful day of his life," Alessio Vinci, CNN's bureau chief in Rome, told me, describing the lavish preparations that Berlusconi made last year at Pratica di Mare, near Rome, to celebrate the accord between Russia and NATO. "He said so: 'This is the most beautiful day of my life!' But the thing is, these guys have the most beautiful day of their life every day."

Berlusconi, by then, was Foreign Minister as well as Prime Minister. The original Foreign Minister, a former World Trade Organization director general named Renato Ruggiero, had quit in January of 2002, unable to do his job properly, with Berlusconi silent on the subject of some of his most vocally anti-European ministers—not to mention with Bossi publicly referring to Europe as "Gallows Land." Ruggiero left for London, to work for an investment bank. (He replied to my request for an interview last fall with a note that read, "I no longer wish to be involved in any political activity, especially Italian.") Berlusconi grabbed the job. He swore that it was temporary, but it was clear that he loved being Foreign Minister. He got to leave Rome, where no one else was a "world leader," whenever the cabinet started bickering, or the unions demonstrated, or one of the Milan prosecutors gave an interview—and the satellite images would bounce back of Silvio rushing around the planet, like the Pope, giving the people hope, solving everybody's problems. He turned the news into an ongoing album of his adventures, as entertaining as the album of songs he wrote, with an entertainer from Naples, during fourteen all-nighters last year. ("All are very beautiful, I must say," he told me. "Everyone who listens to them says the music is fantastic, the lyrics fantastic.") People who have travelled with Berlusconi say that, for a group of diplomats known to be even less active than the average Italian post-office clerk fifteen minutes before lunchtime, having a songwriter as Foreign Minister was actually quite bracing. Alberto Michelini, a Forza Italia deputy with a portfolio on Africa, told me, "The charge he gives you is infectious. Look, I'm not a fanatic of Berlusconi. I know his defects. He always wants to be the protagonist, the most, the best, the numero uno. But at the same time he *is* numero uno. The ideas are always his."

Berlusconi told me that he was doing nothing less than "transforming Italian diplomacy." He said, "I want diplomacy to be oriented toward supporting the Italian economy abroad . . . and Italian investments abroad," which is undoubtedly as it should be, even if the investments are in large part his. He considered the experiment a huge success, so much so that it took him a year to appoint a new Foreign Minister. This time, he chose a civil servant who was already a minister, and who was known to take his instructions quietly and never to step too visibly onto center stage. When it comes to representing the Italian economy abroad, the stage definitely still belongs to Berlusconi. He spoke at the New York Stock Exchange one day this September—he was in the city for the opening session at the United Nations (and, despite a protest by three American Jewish Nobel economics laureates, to receive a "distinguished statesman" award from the Anti-Defamation League)—telling investors to come to Italy, where there were fewer Communists, prettier secretaries, and no inheritance taxes.

Last winter, I stopped in Milan to see Francesco Saverio Borrelli, who had recently retired as the prosecutor general of Milan—the man who thirteen years ago gave the go-ahead to a team of frustrated young prosecutors and stood by them from the day they indicted a crooked Socialist politician, on the take from a local funeral parlor, to the day they first indicted the Prime Minister of Italy. Borrelli is a quiet and surprisingly gentle person. He lives with his wife in a small, tidy apartment in a housing block of small, tidy apartments, and you wouldn't know how important he's been to the history of Italy over the past twelve years if it weren't for the phone ringing, and his old deputies checking in, and the powerful integrity he projects. Borrelli had inaugurated that judicial year with a speech that became famous, repeating the old Partisan chant "*Resistere! Resistere!*" to an audience of Milan magistrates who came to the ceremonies wearing (exceptionally) their black robes and carrying copies of the constitution—as, in fact, magistrates had in just about every courthouse in Italy, in a show of solidarity with the ninety-two prosecutors who had worked together on Borelli's watch.



The morning I saw Borrelli, he'd been on the phone with Ilda Boccassini, the prosecutor with the pearls. She was arguing a case that involved Berlusconi and one of his lawyers, and the attacks against her had been continuous, personal, and vicious. It was clear that Borrelli took no pleasure in challenging a Prime Minister. He knew that the justice system in Italy was badly flawed; he thought it should be reformed, but not in the way Berlusconi was suggesting. Berlusconi wanted to put magistrates under periodic review by what would be a highly politicized supreme court. He had even proposed giving parliament the right to "prioritize" certain kinds of cases for investigation, creating a sliding scale of actionable offenses that would, presumably, put his own at the bottom of the list. There weren't many magistrates, left or right, who could agree to that, though Borrelli was worried. He thought that, with their colleagues demonized, fewer prosecutors would want to take on the kind of corruption cases that Boccassini and the other Milan prosecutors were still handling. Berlusconi had claimed to be making his own case, in parliament, every day. It was there in the "idealism" of his speeches. "It shouldn't be me who says this, but there's a world of difference between my speeches, which are full of ideals and visions of the future, and the speeches of all those other leaders, who were really just the accountants, the bookkeepers of politics," he told me. But Borrelli said that if the Prime Minister had made his case it was by playing on the fear of ordinary people. Borrelli thought that "fear of Communism" was another way of making people feel "If a Berlusconi can be indicted, then so can I if I run a light or forget to put on my seat belt." He told me, "Berlusconi thought my '*Resistere!*' was political, but I was saying, 'Resist this tendency to illegality. Resist the temptation.' " ♦

FICTION

TOOTH AND CLAW

BY T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE

The weather had absolutely nothing to do with it—though the rain had been falling off and on throughout the day and the way the gutters were dripping made me feel as if despair were the mildest term in the dictionary—because I would have gone down to Daggett's that afternoon even if the sun were shining and all the fronds of the palm trees were gilded with light. The problem was work. Or, more specifically, the lack of it. The boss had called at 6:30 A.M. to tell me not to come in, because the guy I'd been replacing had recovered sufficiently from his wrenched back to feel up to working, and, no, he wasn't firing me, because they'd be on to a new job next week and he could use all the hands he could get. "So take a couple days off and enjoy yourself," he'd rumbled into the phone in his low, hoarse, uneven voice, which always seemed on the verge of morphing into something else altogether—squawks and bleats or maybe just static. "You're young, right? Go out and get yourself some tail. Get drunk. Go to the library. Help old ladies across the street. You know what I mean?"

It had been a long day: breakfast out of a cardboard box while cartoon images flickered and faded and reconstituted themselves on the TV screen, and then some desultory reading, starting with the newspaper and a couple of *National Geographics* I'd picked up at a yard sale; lunch at the deli, where I had ham-and-cheese in a tortilla wrap and exchanged exactly eleven words with the girl behind the counter ("No. 7, please, no mayo." "Have a nice day." "You, too"), and a walk to the beach that left my sneakers sodden. And, after all that, it was still only three o'clock in the afternoon and I had to force myself to stay away from the bar till five, five at least.

I wasn't stupid. And I had no intention of becoming a drunk like all the hard-assed old men in the shopping-mall-blighted town I grew up in, silent men with hate in their eyes and complaint eating away at their insides—like my own dead father, for that matter—but I was new here, or relatively new (nine weeks now and counting), and Daggett's was the only place I felt comfortable. And why? Precisely because it was filled with old men drinking themselves into oblivion. It made me think of home. Or feel at home, anyway.

The irony wasn't lost on me. The whole reason I'd moved out to the Coast to live, first with my Aunt Kim and her husband, Waverley, and then in my own one-bedroom apartment with kitchenette and a three-by-six-foot balcony with a partially obscured view of the Pacific, half a mile off, was so that I could inject a little excitement into my life and mingle with all the college students in the bars that lined State Street cheek to jowl, but here I was hanging out in an old-man's bar that smelled of death and vomit and felt as closed in as a submarine, when just outside the door were all the exotic, sunstruck glories of California. Where it never rained. Except in winter. And it was winter now.

I nodded self-consciously at the six or seven regulars lined up at the bar, then ordered a Jack-and-Coke, the only drink besides beer that I liked the taste of, and I didn't really like the taste of beer. There were sports on the three TVs hanging from the ceiling—this was a sports bar—but the volume was down and the speakers were blaring the same tired hits of the sixties that I could have heard back home. Ad nauseam. When the bartender—*he* was young, at least, as were the waitresses—set down my drink, I made a comment about the weather, "Nice day for sunbathing, isn't it?," and the two regulars nearest me glanced up with something like interest in their eyes. "Or maybe bird-watching," I added, feeling encouraged, and they swung their heads back to the familiar triangulation of their splayed elbows and cocktail glasses and that was the end of that.

It must have been seven or so, the rain still coming down and people briefly enlivened by the novelty of it as they came and went in spasms of umbrella furling and unfurling, when a guy about my age—or, no, he must have been thirty, or close to it—came in and took the seat beside me. He was wearing a baseball cap, a jean jacket, and a T-shirt that said "Obligatory Death," which I took to be the name of a band, though I'd never heard of them. His hair was blond, cut short around the ears, and he had a soul beard that was like a pale stripe painted under his lip by an unsteady hand. We exchanged the standard greeting—*What's up?*—and then he flagged down the bartender and ordered a draft beer, a shot of tomato juice, and two raw eggs.

"Raw eggs?" the bartender echoed, as if he hadn't heard right.

"Yeah. Two raw eggs, in the shell."

The bartender—his name was Chris, or maybe it was Matt—gave a smile and scratched the back of his head. "We can do them over easy or sunny-side up or poached even, but *raw*, I don't know. I mean, nobody's ever requested raw before—"

"Ask the chef, why don't you?"

The bartender shrugged. "Sure," he said, "no problem." He started off in the direction of the kitchen, then pulled up short. "You want toast with that, home fries, or what?"

"Just the eggs."

Everybody was watching now, any little drama worth the price of admission, especially on a night like this, but the bartender—Chris, his name was definitely Chris—just went down to the other end of the bar and communicated the order to the waitress, who made a notation in her pad and disappeared into the kitchen. A moment went by, and then the man turned to me and said in a voice loud enough for everybody to hear, "Jesus, this music sucks. Are we caught in a time warp here, or what?"

The old men—the regulars—glanced up from their drinks and gave him a look, but they were gray-haired and slack in the belly and they knew their limits.

"Yeah," I heard myself say, "it really sucks," and before I knew it I was talking passionately about the bands that meant the most to me even as the new guy poured tomato juice in his beer and sipped the foam off the top, while the music rumbled defiantly on and people with wet shoes and dripping umbrellas crowded in behind us. The eggs, brown-shelled and naked in the middle of a standard dinner plate, were delivered by Daria, a waitress I'd had my eye on, though I hadn't yet worked up the nerve to say more than hello and goodbye to her. "Your order, sir," she said, easing the plate down on the bar. "You need anything with that? Ketchup? Tabasco?"

"No," he said, "that's fine," and everyone was waiting for him to crack the eggs over his beer, but he didn't even look at them. He was looking at Daria, holding her with his eyes. "So, what's your name?" he asked, grinning.

She told him, and she was grinning, too.

PETER STEMMLER

"Nice to meet you," he said, taking her hand. "I'm Ludwig."

"Ludwig," she repeated, pronouncing it with a "V," as he had, though as far as I could tell—from his clothes and accent, which was pure Southern California—he wasn't German. Or if he was he sure had his English down.

"Are you German?" Daria was flirting with him, and the realization of it began to harden me against him in the most rudimentary way.

"No," he said. "I'm from Hermosa Beach, born and raised. It's the name, right?"

"I had this German teacher last year? His name was Ludwig, that's all."

"You're in college?"

She told him she was, which was news to me. Working her way through. Majoring in business. She wanted to own her own restaurant someday.

"It was my mother's idea," he said, as if he'd been mulling it over. "She was listening to the 'Eroica' Symphony the night I was born." He shrugged. "It's been my curse ever since."

"I don't know," she said. "I think it's kind of cute. You don't get many Ludwigs, you know?"

"Yeah, tell me about it," he said, sipping his beer.

She lingered, though there were other things she could have been doing. "So, what about the eggs?" she said. "You going to need utensils, or—"

"Or what? Am I going to suck them out of the shell?"

"Yeah," she said, "something like that."

He reached out a hand cluttered with silver to embrace the eggs and gently roll them back and forth across the gleaming expanse of the plate. "No, I'm just going to fondle them," he said, and got the expected response: she laughed. "But does anybody still play dice around here?" he called down the bar as the eyes of the regulars slid in our direction and then away again.

In those days—and this was ten years ago or more—the game of Horse was popular in certain California bars, as were smoking, unprotected sex, and various other adult pleasures that may or may not have been hazardous to your health. There were five dice, shaken in a cup, and you slammed that cup down on the bar, trying for the highest cumulative score, which was thirty. Anything could be bet on, from the next round of drinks to ponying up for the jukebox.

The rain hissed at the door and it opened briefly to admit a stamping, umbrellaless couple. Ludwig's question hung unanswered on the air. "No? How about you, Daria?"

"I can't—I'm working."

He turned to me. I had no work in the morning or the next morning, either—maybe no work at all. My apartment wasn't what I'd thought it would be, not without somebody to share it with, and I'd already vowed to myself that I'd rather sleep on the streets than go back to my aunt's, because going back there would represent the worst kind of defeat. *Take good care of my baby, Kim*, my mother had said when she dropped me off. *He's the only one I've got.*

"Sure," I said. "I guess. What're we playing for—for drinks, right?" I began fumbling in my pockets, awkward—I was drunk, I could feel it. "Because I don't have, well, maybe ten bucks—"

"No," he said, "no," already rising from his seat, "you just wait here, just one minute, you'll see," and then he was out the door and into the grip of the rain.

Daria hadn't moved. She was dressed in the standard outfit for Daggett's employees—shorts, white ankle socks, and a T-shirt with the name of the establishment blazoned across the chest, her legs pale and silken in the flickering light of the fake fireplace in the corner. She gave me a sympathetic look, and I shrugged to show her that I was ready for anything, a real man of the world.

There was a noise at the door—a scraping and shifting—and we all looked up to see Ludwig struggling with something there against the backdrop of the rain. His hat had been knocked askew and water dripped from his nose and chin. It took a moment, one shoulder pinning the door open, and then he lifted a cage—a substantial cage, two and a half feet high and maybe four feet long—through the doorway and set it down against the wall. No one moved. No one said a word. There was something in the cage, the apprehension of it as sharp and sudden as the smell it brought with it, something wild and alien and very definitely out of the ordinary on what to this point had been a painfully ordinary night.

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Ludwig wiped the moisture from his face with a swipe of his sleeve, straightened out his hat, and came back to the bar, looking jaunty and refreshed. "All right," he said, "don't be shy—go have a look. It won't bite. Or it will, it definitely will, just don't get your fingers near it, that's all."

I saw coiled limbs, claws, yellow eyes. Whatever it was, the thing hadn't moved, not even to blink. I was going to ask what it was when Daria, still at my side, said, "It's a cat, some kind of wildcat, right? A what—a lynx or something?"

"You can't have that thing in here," one of the regulars said, but already he was getting up out of his seat to have a look at it—everyone was getting up now, shoving back chairs and rising from the tables, crowding around.

"It's a serval," Ludwig was saying. "From Africa. Thirty-five pounds of muscle and quicker than a snake."

And where had he got it? He'd won it, in a bar in Arizona, on a roll of the dice.

How long had he had it? Two years.

What was its name? Cat. Just Cat. And, yes, it was a male, and, no, he didn't want to get rid of it but he was moving overseas on a new job and there was just no way he could take it with him, so he felt that it was apropos—that was the word he used, "apropos"—to give it up in the way he'd got it.

He turned to me. "What was your name again?"

"Junior," I said. "James, Jr., Turner, I mean. James Turner, Jr. But everybody calls me Junior." I wanted to add, "Because of my father, so people wouldn't confuse us," but I left it at that, because it got even more complicated considering that my father was six months dead and I could be anybody I wanted.

"O.K., Junior, here's the deal," Ludwig said. "Your ten bucks against the cat, one roll. What do you say?"

I wanted to say that I had no place for the thing, that I didn't want a cat of any kind or even a guinea pig or a fish in a bowl and that the ten dollars was meaningless, but everyone was watching me and I couldn't back out without feeling the shame rise to my face—and there was Daria to consider, because she was watching me, too. "Yeah," I said. "Yeah, O.K., sure."

Sixty seconds later, I was still solvent and richer by one cat and one cage. I'd got lucky—or unlucky, depending on how you want to look at it—and rolled three fives and two fours; Ludwig rolled a combined eleven. He finished his beer in a gulp, took my hand to seal the deal, and then started toward the door. "But what do I feed it?" I called. "I mean, what does it eat?"

"Eggs," he said. "It loves eggs. And meat. Raw. No kibble, forget kibble. This is the real deal, this animal, and you need to treat it right." He was at the door, looking down at the thing with what might have been wistfulness or satisfaction, I couldn't tell which, then he reached down behind the cage to unfasten something there—a gleam of black leather—and toss it to me: it was a glove, or a gauntlet, actually, as long as my arm. "You'll want to wear this when you feed him," he said, and then he was gone.

For a long moment, I stared at the door, trying to work out what had happened, and then I looked at the regulars—at the expressions on their faces—and at the other customers, locals or maybe even tourists, who'd come in for a beer or a burger or the catch of the day and had all this strangeness thrust on them, and finally at the cage. Daria was bent beside it, cooing to the animal inside, Ludwig's eggs cradled in one hand. She was short and compact, conventionally pretty, with the round eyes and symmetrical features of an anime heroine, her running shoes no bigger than a child's, her blond hair pulled back in a ponytail, and I'd noticed all that before, over the course of weeks of study, but now it came to me with the force of revelation. She was beautiful, a beautiful girl propped on one knee, while her shorts rode up in back and her T-shirt bunched beneath her breasts, offering this cat—my cat—the smallest comfort, as if it were a kitten she'd found abandoned on the street.

"Jesus, what are you going to do with the thing?" Chris had come out from behind the bar and he was standing beside me now, looking awed.

"Hello again, and welcome to another edition of 'This Old Issue.'"

I told him that I didn't know. That I hadn't planned on owning a wildcat, hadn't even known they existed—servals, that is—until five minutes ago.

"You live around here?"

"Bayview Apartments."

"They accept pets?"

I'd never really given it much thought, but they did, they must have—the guy next door to me had a pair of yapping little dogs with bows in their hair, and the woman down the hall had a Doberman that was forever scrabbling its nails on the linoleum when she came in and out with it, which she seemed to do about a hundred times a day. But this was something different. This was something that might push at the parameters of the standard lease. "Yeah," I said, "I think so."

There was a single slot where the door of the cage fastened that was big enough to receive an egg without crushing its shell, and Daria, still cooing, rolled first one egg, then the other, through the aperture. For a moment, nothing happened. Then the cat, hunched against the mesh, shifted position ever so slightly and took the first egg in its mouth—two teeth like hypodermics, a crunch, and then the soft frictive scrape of its tongue.

Daria rose and came to me with a look of wonder. "Don't do a thing till I get off, O.K.?" she said, and in her fervor she took hold of my arm. "I get off at nine, so you wait, O.K.?"

"Yeah," I said. "Sure."

"We can put him in the back of the storage room for now, and then, well, I guess we can use my pickup."

I didn't have the leisure to reflect on how complex things had become all of a sudden, and even if I had I don't think I would have behaved any differently. I just nodded at her, stared into her plenary eyes and nodded.

"He's going to be all right," she said, and added, "He will," as if I'd been disagreeing with her. "I've got to get back to work, but you wait, O.K.? You wait right here." Chris was watching. The manager was watching. The regulars had all craned their necks and half the dinner customers, too. Daria patted down her apron, smoothed back her hair. "What did you say your name was again?"

So I had a cat. And a girl. We put the thing in the back of her red Toyota pickup, threw a tarp over it to keep the rain off, and drove to Vons, where I watched Daria march up and down the aisles seeking out kitty litter and the biggest cat pan they had (we settled for a dishpan, hard blue plastic that looked all but indestructible), and then it was on to the meat counter. "I've only got ten bucks," I said.

She gave me a withering look. "This animal's got to eat," she informed me, and she reached back to slip the band from her ponytail so that her hair fell glistening across her shoulders, a storm of hair, fluid and loose, the ends trailing down her back like liquid in motion. She tossed her head impatiently. "You do have a credit card, don't you?"

Ten minutes later, I was directing her back to my building, where she parked next to the Mustang I'd inherited when my father died, and then we went up the outside stairs and along the walkway to my apartment, on the second floor. "I'm sorry," I said, swinging open the door and hitting the light switch, "but I'm afraid I'm not much of a housekeeper." I was going to add that I hadn't expected company, either, or I would have straightened up, but Daria just strode right in, cleared a spot on the counter, and set down the groceries. I watched her shoulders as she reached into the depths of one bag after another and extracted the forty-odd dollars' worth of chicken parts and rib-eye steak (marked down for quick sale) that we'd selected in the meat department.

"O.K.," she said, turning to me as soon as she'd made space in the refrigerator for it all, "now where are we going to put the cat, because I don't think we should leave it out there in the truck any longer than we have to, do you? Cats don't like the rain, I know that—I have two of them. Or one's a kitten, really." She was on the other side of the kitchen counter, a clutter of crusted dishes and glasses sprouting colonies of mold between us. "You have a bedroom, right?"

I did. But if I was embarrassed by the state of the kitchen and living room—this was my first venture at living alone, and the need for order hadn't really seemed paramount to me—then the thought of the bedroom, with its funk of dirty clothes and unwashed sheets, the reeking workboots and the duffelbag out of which I'd been living, gave me pause. Here was this beautiful apparition in my kitchen, the only person besides my aunt who'd ever stepped through the door of my apartment, and now she was about to discover the sad, lonely disorder at the heart of my life. "Yeah," I said. "That door there, to the left of the bathroom." But she was already in the room, pushing things aside, a frown of concentration pressed between her eyes.

"You're going to have to clear this out," she said. "The bed, everything. All your clothes."

I was standing in the doorway, watching her. "What do you mean, 'clear it out'?"

She lifted her face. "You don't think that animal can stay caged up like that, do you? There's hardly room for it to turn around. And that's just cruel." She drilled me with that look again, then put her hands on her hips. "I'll help you," she said. "It shouldn't take ten minutes."

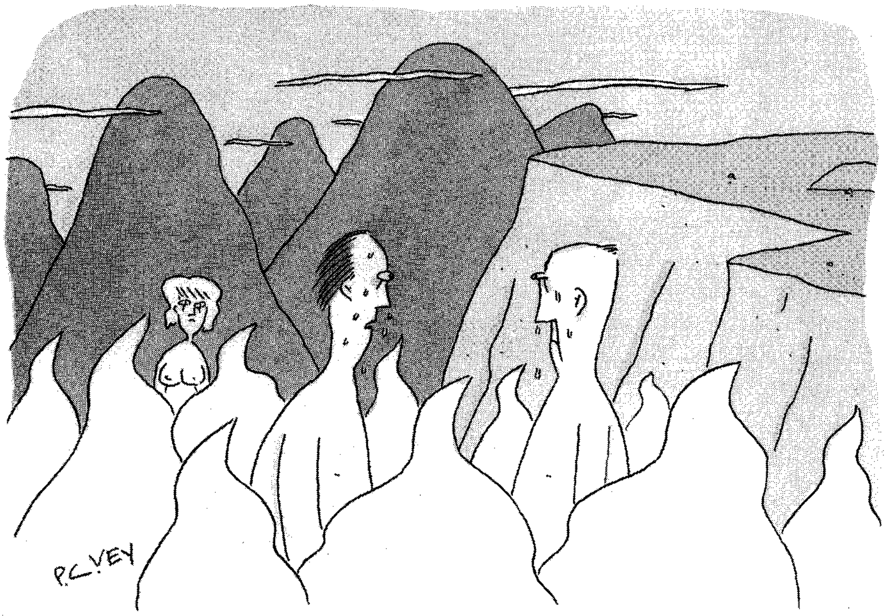
Then it was up the stairs with the cat, the two of us fighting the awkwardness of the cage. We kept the tarp knotted tightly in place, both to keep the rain off the cat and to disguise it from any of my neighbors who might happen by, and, though we shifted the angle of the thing coming up the stairs, the animal didn't make a sound. We had a little trouble getting the cage through the doorway—the cat seemed to concentrate its weight as if in silent protest—but we managed, and then we maneuvered it into the bedroom and set it down in the middle of the rug. Daria had already arranged the litter box in the corner, atop several sheets of newspaper, and she'd taken my biggest stewpot, filled it with water, and placed it just inside the door, where I could get to it easily. "O.K.," she said, glancing up at me with a satisfied look, "it's time for the unveiling," and she bent to unfasten the tarp.

The overhead light glared, the tarp slid from the cage and puddled on the floor, and there was the cat, pressed to the mesh in a compression of limbs, its yellow eyes seizing on us. "Nice kitty," Daria cooed. "Does he want out of that awful cage? Hmm? Does he? And meat—does he want meat?"

So far, I'd gone along with everything in a kind of daze, but this was problematic. Who knew what the thing would do, what its habits were, its needs? "How are we going to—" I began, and left the rest unspoken. The light stung my eyes, and the alcohol whispered in my blood. "You remember what that guy said about feeding him, right?" In the back of my head, there was the smallest glimmer of a further complication: once he was out of the cage, how would we—how would I—ever get him back into it?

For the first time, Daria looked doubtful. "We'll have to be quick," she said.

And so we were. Daria stood at the bedroom door, ready to slam it shut, while I leaned forward, my heart pounding, and slipped the bolt on the cage. I was nimble in those days—twenty-three years old and with excellent reflexes despite the four or five Jack-and-Cokes I'd downed in the course of the evening—and I sprang for the door the instant the bolt was released. Exhilaration burned in me. It burned in the cat, too, because at the first click of the bolt it came to life as if it had been hot-wired. A screech tore through the room, the cage flew open,



"It's not the heat—it's the eternal damnation."

and the thing was an airborne blur slamming against the cheap plywood panel of the bedroom door, even as Daria and I fought to force it shut.

In the morning (she'd slept on the couch, curled up in the fetal position, faintly snoring; I was stretched out on the mattress we'd removed from the bedroom and tucked against the wall under the TV), I was faced with a number of problems. I'd awakened before her, jolted out of a dreamless sleep by a flash of awareness, and for a long while I just lay there watching her. I could have gone on watching her all morning, thrilled by her presence, her hair, the repose of her face, if it weren't for the cat. It hadn't made a sound, and it didn't stink, not yet, but its existence was communicated to me nonetheless—it was there, and I could feel it. I would have to feed it, and after the previous night's episode, that was going to require some thought and preparation, and I would have to offer Daria something, too, if only to hold her here a little longer. Eggs, I could scramble some eggs, but there was no bread for toast, no milk, no sugar for the coffee. And she would want to freshen up in the bathroom—women always freshened up in the morning, I was pretty sure of that. I thought of the neatly folded little matching towels in the guest bathroom at my aunt's and contrasted that image with the corrugated rag wadded up on the floor somewhere in my own bathroom. Maybe I should go out for bagels or muffins or something, I thought—and a new towel. But did they sell towels at 7-Eleven? I didn't have a clue.

We'd stayed up late, sharing the last of the hot cocoa out of the foil packet and talking in a specific way about the cat that had brought us to that moment on the greasy couch in my semi-darkened living room and then more generally about our own lives and thoughts and hopes and ambitions. I'd heard about her mother, her two sisters, the courses she was taking at the university. Heard about Daggett's, the regulars, the tips—or lack of them. And her restaurant fantasy. It was amazingly detailed, right down to the number of tables she was planning on, the dinnerware, the cutlery, and the paintings on the walls, as well as the décor and the clientele—"Late twenties, early thirties, career people, no kids"—and a dozen or more of the dishes she would specialize in. My ambitions were more modest. I'd told her how I'd finished community college without any particular aim or interest, and how I was working setting tile for a friend of my aunt and uncle; beyond that, I was hoping to maybe travel up the coast and see Oregon. I'd heard a lot about Oregon, I told her. Very clean. Very natural up there. Had she ever been to Oregon? No, but she'd like to go. I remembered telling her that she ought to open her restaurant up there, someplace by the water, where people could look out and take in the view. "Yeah," she'd said, "that'd be cool," and then she'd yawned and dropped her head to the pillow.

I was just getting up to see what I could do about the towel in the bathroom, thinking vaguely of splashing some aftershave on it to fight down any offensive odors it might have picked up, when her eyes flashed open. She didn't say my name or wonder where she was or ask for breakfast or where the bathroom was. She just said, "We have to feed that cat."

"Don't you want coffee or anything—breakfast? I can make breakfast."

She threw back the blanket and I saw that her legs were bare. She was wearing the Daggett's T-shirt over a pair of shiny black panties; her running shoes, socks, and shorts were balled up on the rug beneath her. "Sure," she said. "Coffee sounds nice." And she pushed her fingers through her hair on both sides of her head and then let it all fall forward to obscure her face. She sat there a moment before leaning forward to dig a hair clip out of her purse, arch her back, and pull the hair tight in a ponytail. "But I am worried about the cat, in new surroundings and all. The poor thing—we should have fed him last night."

Perhaps so. And I certainly didn't want to contradict her—I wanted to be amicable and charming, wanted to ingratiate myself in any way I could—but we'd both been so terrified of the animal's power in that moment when we'd released it from the cage that neither of us had felt up to the challenge of attempting to feed it. Attempting to feed it would have meant opening that door again, and that was going to take some thought and commitment. "Yeah," I said. "We should have. And we will, we will, but coffee, coffee first—you want a cup? I can make you a cup?"

So we drank coffee and ate the strawberry Pop-Tarts I found in the cupboard above the sink and made small talk as if we'd awakened together a hundred mornings running, and it was so tranquil and so domestic and so right I never wanted it to end. We were talking about work and about what time she had to be in that afternoon, when her brow furrowed and her eyes sharpened and she said, "I wish I could see it. When we feed it, I mean. Couldn't you, like, cut a peephole in the door or something?"

I was glad for the distraction, damage deposit notwithstanding. And the idea appealed to me: now we could see what the thing—my pet—was up to, and if we could see it then it wouldn't seem so unapproachable and mysterious. I'd have to get to know it eventually, have to name it and tame it, maybe even walk it on a leash. I had a brief vision of myself sauntering down the sidewalk, this id with claws at my side, turning heads and cowing the weight lifters with their Dobermans and Rottweilers, and then I fished my power drill out from under the sink and cut a neat hole, half an inch in diameter, in the bedroom door. As soon as it was finished, Daria put her eye to it.

"Well?"

"The poor thing. He's pacing back and forth like an animal in a zoo."

She moved to the side and took my arm as I pressed my eye to the hole. The cat flowed like molten ore from one corner of the room to the other, its yellow eyes fixed on the door, the dun, faintly spotted skin stretched like spandex over its seething muscles. I saw that the kitty litter had been upended and the hard blue plastic pan reduced to chewed-over pellets, and wondered about that, about where the thing would do its business if not in the pan. "It turned over the kitty pan," I said.

She was still holding my arm. "I know."

"It chewed it to shreds."

"Metal. We'll have to get a metal one, like a trough or something."

I took my eye from the peephole and

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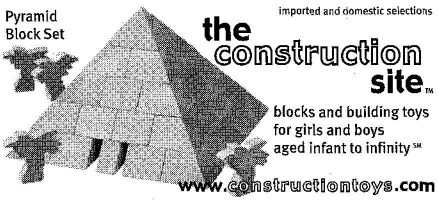
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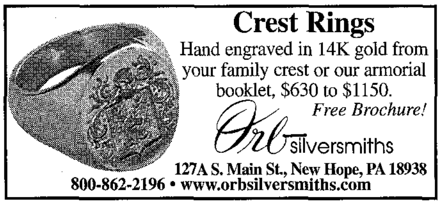
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turned to her. "But how am I going to change it—don't you have to change it?"

Her eyes were shining. "Oh, it'll settle down. It's just a big kitty, that's all"—and then for the cat, in a syrupy coo—"Isn't that right, kittums?" Next, she went to the refrigerator and extracted one of the steaks, a good pound and a half of meat. "Put on the glove," she said, "and I'll hold on to the doorknob while you feed him."

"What about the blood—won't the blood get on the carpet?" The gauntlet smelled of saddle soap and it was gouged and pitted down the length of it; it fit me as if it had been custom-made.

"I'll press the blood out with a paper towel—here, look," she said, dabbing at the meat in the bottom of the sink and then lifting it on the end of a fork. I took the fork from her and together we went to the bedroom door.

I don't know if the cat smelled the blood or if it heard us at the door, but the *instant* I turned the knob it was there. I counted three, then jerked the door back just enough to get my arm and the dangle of meat into the room even as the cat exploded against the doorframe and the meat vanished. We pushed the door to—Daria's face was flushed and she seemed to be giggling or gasping for air—and then we took turns watching the thing drag the steak back and forth across the rug as if it still needed killing. By the time the cat was done, there was blood everywhere, even on the ceiling.

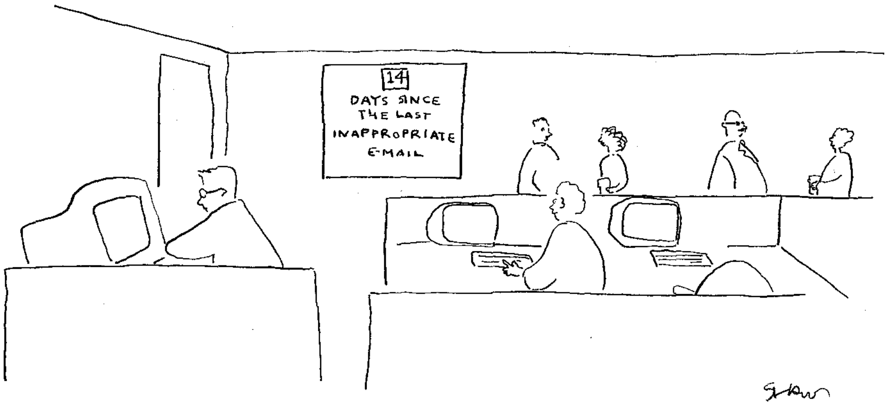
After Daria left for work, I didn't know what to do with myself. The cat was ominously silent and when I pressed my eye to the peephole I saw that it had dragged its cage into the far corner and was slumped behind it, apparently asleep. I flicked on the TV and sat through the usual idiocy, which was briefly enlivened by a nature show on the Serengeti that gave a cursory glimpse of a cat like mine—"The serval lives in rocky kopjes, where it keeps a wary eye on its enemies, the lion and the hyena, feeding principally on small prey, rabbits, birds, even snakes and lizards," the narrator informed me in a hushed voice—and then I went to the sandwich shop and ordered the No. 7 special, no mayo, and took it down to the beach. It was a clear day, all the haze and particulate matter washed out of the air by the previous day's deluge, and I sat there with the sun on my face and watched the waves ride in on top of one another while I ate and considered the altered condition of my life. Daria's face had got serious as she stood at the door, her T-shirt rumpled, her hair pulled back so tightly from her scalp I could make out each individual strand. "Take care of our cat now, O.K.?" she said. "I'll be back as soon as I get off." I shrugged in a helpless, submissive way, the pain of her leaving as acute as anything I'd ever felt. "Sure," I said, and then she reached for my shoulders and pulled me to her for a kiss—on the lips. "You're sweet," she said.

So I was sweet. No one had ever called me sweet before, not since childhood, anyway, and I have to admit the designation thrilled me, bloomed inside me like the promise of things to come. I began to see her as a prime mover in my life, her naked legs stretched out on the couch, the hair falling across her shoulders at the kitchen table, her lips locked on mine. But as I sat there eating my ham-and-cheese wrap a conflicting thought came to me: there had to be someone in her life already, a girl that beautiful, working in a bar, and I was deluding myself to think I had a chance with her. She had to have a boyfriend—she could even be engaged, for all I knew. I tried to focus on the previous night, on her hands and fingers—had she been wearing a ring? And, if she had, then where was the fiancé, the boyfriend, whoever he was? I hated him already, and I didn't even know if he existed.

The upshot of all this was that I found myself in the cool subterranean glow of Daggett's at three-thirty in the afternoon, nursing a Jack-and-Coke like one of the regulars while Daria, the ring finger of her left hand as unencumbered as mine, cleared up after the lunch crowd and set the tables for the dinner rush. Chris came on at five, and he called me by my name and refreshed my drink before he even glanced at the regulars, and for the next hour or so, during the lulls, we conversed about any number of things, beginning with the most obvious—the cat—but veering into sports, music, books, and films, and I found myself expanding into a new place altogether. At one point, Daria stopped by to ask if the cat was settling in—Was he still pacing around neurotically or what?—and I could tell her with some assurance that he was asleep. "He's probably nocturnal," I said, "or something like that." And then, with Chris looking on, I couldn't help adding, "You're still coming over, right? After work? To help me feed him, I mean."

She looked to Chris, then let her gaze wander out over the room. "Oh, yeah," she said, "yeah," and there was a catch of hesitation in her voice. "I'll be there."

I let that hang a moment, but I was insecure and the alcohol was having its effect and I couldn't leave it alone. "We can drive over together," I said, "because I didn't bring my car."



She was looking tired by the end of her shift, the bounce gone out of her step, her hair a shade duller under the drab lights, and even as I switched to coffee I noticed Chris slipping her a shot of something down at the end of the bar. I'd had a sandwich around six, and then, so as not to seem overanxious, I'd taken a walk, which brought me into another bar down the street, where I had a Jack-and-Coke and didn't say a word to anyone, and then I'd returned at eight to drink coffee and hold her to her promise.

We didn't say much on the way over to my place. It was only a five-minute drive, and there was a song on that we both liked. Plus, it seemed to me that when you were comfortable with someone you could respect the silences. I'd gone to the cash machine earlier and in a hopeful mood stocked up on breakfast things—eggs, English muffins, a quart each of no-fat and two-per-cent milk, an expensive Chinese tea that came in individual foil packets—and I'd picked up two bottles of a local Chardonnay that was supposed to be really superior, or at least that was what the guy in the liquor department had told me, as well as a bag of corn chips and a jar of salsa. There were two new bathroom towels hanging on the rack beside the medicine cabinet, and I'd given the whole place a good vacuuming and left the dishes to soak in a sink of scalding water and the last few molecules of dish soap left in the plastic container I'd brought with me from my aunt's. The final touch was a pair of clean sheets and a light blanket folded suggestively over the arm of the couch.

Daria didn't seem to notice—she went straight to the bedroom door and affixed her eye to the peephole. "I can't see anything," she said, leaning into the door, the muscles of her calves flexing as she went up on her toes. "It's too bad we didn't think of a night-light or something."

I was watching her out of the corner of my eye—admiring her, amazed all over again at her presence—while working the corkscrew in the bottle. I asked her if she'd like a glass of wine. "Chardonnay," I said. "It's a local one, really superior."

"I'd love a glass," she said, turning away from the door and crossing the room to me. I didn't have wineglasses, so we made do with the milky-looking water glasses my aunt had dug out of a box in her basement. "I wonder if you could maybe slip your arm in the door and turn on the light in there," she said. "I'm worried about him. And, plus, we've got to feed him again, right?"

"Sure," I said, "yeah, no problem," but I was in no hurry. I refilled our glasses and broke out the chips and salsa, which she seemed happy enough to see. For a long while, we stood at the kitchen counter, dipping chips and savoring the wine, and then she went to the refrigerator, extracted a slab of meat, and began patting it down with paper towels. I took her cue, donned the gauntlet, braced myself, and jerked the bedroom door open just enough to get my hand in and flick on the light. The cat, which of course had sterling night vision, nearly tore the glove from my arm, and yet the suddenness of the light seemed to confuse it just long enough for me to salvage the situation. The door slammed on a puzzled yowl.

Daria immediately put her eye to the peephole. "Oh my God," she murmured.

"What's he doing?"

"Pacing. But here, you have a look."

The carpeting—every last strip of it—had been torn out of the floor, leaving an expanse of dirty plywood studded with nails, and there seemed to be a hole in the plasterboard just to the left of the window. A substantial hole. Even through the closed door I could smell the reek of cat piss or spray or whatever it was. "There goes my deposit," I said.

She was right there beside me, her hand on my shoulder. "He'll settle down," she assured me, "once he gets used to the place. All cats are like that—they have to establish their territory is all."

"You don't think he can get inside the walls, do you?"

"No," she said, "no way. He's too big."

The only thing I could think to do, especially after an entire day of drinking, was to pour more wine, which I did. Then we repeated the ritual of the morning's feeding—the steak on the fork, the blur of the cat, the savage thump at the door—and took turns watching it eat. After a while, bored with the spectacle—or perhaps "sated" is a better word—we found ourselves on the couch and there was a movie on TV and we finished the wine and the chips and we never stopped talking, a comment on this movie leading to a discussion of movies in general, a reflection on the wine dredging up our mutual experiences of wine tastings and the horrors of Cribari red and Boone's Farm and all the rest. It was midnight before we knew it and she was yawning and stretching.

"I've really got to get home," she said, but she didn't move. "I'm wiped. Just wiped."

"You're welcome to stay over," I said, "I mean, if you don't want to drive, after the wine and all—"

A moment drifted by, neither of us speaking, and then she made a sort of humming noise—"Mmm"—and held out her arms to me even as she sank down into the couch.

I was up before her in the morning, careful not to wake her as I eased myself from the mattress where we'd wound up sleeping because the couch was too narrow for the two of us. My head ached—I wasn't used to so much alcohol—and the effigy of the cat lurked somewhere behind that ache, but I felt buoyant and optimistic. Daria was asleep on the mattress, the cat was hunkered down in his room, and all was right with the world. I brewed coffee, toasted muffins, and fried eggs, and when she woke I was there to feed her. "What do you say to breakfast in bed?" I murmured, easing down beside her with a plate of eggs over easy and a mug of coffee.

I was so intent on watching her eat that I barely touched my own food. After a while, I got up and turned on the radio and there was that song again, the one we'd heard coming home the night before, and we both listened to it all the way through without saying a word. When the d.j. came on with his gasping juvenile voice and lame jokes, she got up and went to the bathroom, passing right by the bedroom door without a thought for the cat. She was in the bathroom a long while, running water, flushing, showering, and I felt lost without her. I wanted to tell her that I loved her, wanted to extend a whole list of invitations to her: she could move in with me, stay here indefinitely, bring her cats with her, no problem, and we could both look after the big cat together, see to its needs, tame it, and make it happy in its new home—no more cages, and meat, plenty of meat. I was scrubbing the frying pan when she emerged, her hair wrapped in one of the new towels. She was wearing makeup and she was dressed in her Daggett's outfit. "Hey," I said.

She didn't answer. She was bent over the couch now, stuffing things into her purse.

"You look terrific," I said.

There was a sound from the bedroom then, a low moan that might have been the expiring gasp of the cat's prey, and I wondered if it had found something in there, a rat, a stray bird attracted to the window, an escaped hamster or lizard. "Listen, Junior," she said, ignoring the moaning, which grew higher and more attenuated now, "you're a nice guy, you really are."

I was behind the Formica counter. My hands were in the dishwater. Something pounded in my head, and I knew what was coming, heard it in her voice, saw it in the way she ducked her head and averted her eyes.

"I can't—I have to tell you something, O.K.? Because you're sweet, you are, and I want to be honest with you."

She raised her face to me all of a sudden, let her eyes stab at mine and then dodge away again. "I have a boyfriend. He's away at school. And I don't know why . . . I mean, I just don't want to give you the wrong impression. It was nice. It was."

The moaning cut off abruptly on a rising note. I didn't know what to say—I was new at this, new and useless. Suddenly I was desperate, looking for anything, any stratagem, the magic words that would make it all right again. "The cat," I said. "What about the cat?"

Her voice was soft. "He'll be all right. Just feed him. Be nice to him." She was at the door, the purse slung over one shoulder. "Patience," she said, "that's all it takes. A little patience."

"Wait," I said. "Wait."

"I've got to go."

"Will I see you later?"

"No," she said. "No, I don't think so."

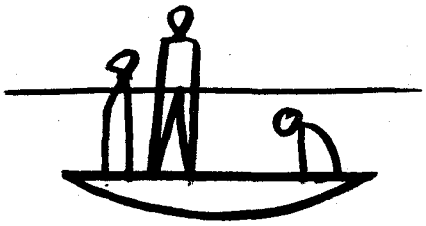
As soon as her pickup pulled out of the lot, I called my boss. He answered on the first ring, raising his voice to be heard over the ambient noise. I could hear the tile saw going in the background, the irregular banging of a hammer, the radio tuned to some jittery right-wing propagandist. "I want to come in," I said.

"Who is this?"

"Junior."

"Monday, Monday at the earliest."

I told him I was going crazy cooped up in my apartment, but he didn't seem to hear me. "What is it?" he said. "Money? Because I'll advance you on next week if you really need it, though it'll mean a trip to the bank I wasn't planning on. Which is a pain in the ass. But I'll do it. Just say the word."



"No, it's not the money, it's just—"

He cut me off. "Don't you ever listen to anything I say? Didn't I tell you to go out and get yourself laid? That's what you're supposed to be doing at your age. It's what I'd be doing."

"Can't I just, I don't know, help out?"

"Monday," he said.

I was angry suddenly and I slammed the phone down. My eyes went to the hole cut in the bedroom door and then to the breakfast plates, egg yolk congealing there in bright-yellow stripes, the muffin, Daria's muffin, untouched but for a single neat bite cut out of the round. It was Friday. I hated my life. How could I have been so stupid?

There was no sound from the bedroom, and as I laced my sneakers I fought down the urge to go to the peephole and see what the cat had accomplished in the night—I just didn't want to think about it. Whether it had vanished like a bad dream or chewed through the wall and devoured the neighbor's yapping little dogs or broken loose and smuggled itself onto a boat back to Africa, it was all the same to me. The only thing I did know was that there was no way I was going to attempt to feed that thing on my own, not without Daria there. It could starve, for all I cared, starve and rot.

Eventually, I fished a jean jacket out of a pile of clothes on the floor and went down to the beach. The day was overcast and a cold wind out of the east scoured the sand. I must have walked for hours and then, for lack of anything better to do, I went to a movie, after which I had a sandwich at a new place downtown where college students were rumored to hang out. There were no students there as far as I could see, just old men who looked exactly like the regulars at Daggett's, except that they had their square-shouldered old wives with them and their squalling unhappy children. By four I'd hit my first bar, and by six I was drunk.

I tried to stay away from Daggett's—*Give her a day or two*, I told myself. *Don't nag, don't be a burden*—but at quarter of nine I found myself at the bar, ordering a Jack-and-Coke from Chris. Chris gave me a look, and everything had changed since yesterday. "You sure?" he said.

I asked him what he meant.

"You look like you've had enough, buddy."

I craned my neck to look for Daria, but all I saw were the regulars, hunched over their drinks. "Just pour," I said.

The music was there like a persistent annoyance, dead music, ancient, appreciated by no one, not even the regulars. It droned on. Chris set down my drink and I lifted it to my lips. "Where's Daria?" I asked.

"She got off early. Said she was tired. Slow night, you know?"

I felt a stab of disappointment, jealousy, hate. "You have a number for her?"

Chris gave me a wary look, as if he knew something I didn't. "You mean she didn't give you her number?"

"No," I said. "We never—well, she was at my house . . ."

"We can't give out personal information."

"To me? I said she was at my house. Last night. I need to talk to her, and it's urgent—about the cat. She's really into the cat, you know?"

"Sorry."

I threw it back at him. "You're sorry? Well, fuck you—I'm sorry, too."

"You know what, buddy—"

"Junior, the name's Junior."

He leaned into the bar, both arms propped before him, and in a very soft voice he said, "I think you'd better leave now."

It had begun to rain again, a soft patter in the leaves that grew steadier and harder as I walked home. Cars went by on the boulevard with the sound of paper tearing, and they dragged whole worlds behind them. The street lights were dim. There was nobody out. When I came up the hill to my apartment, I saw the Mustang standing there under the carport, and though I'd always been averse to drinking and driving—a lesson I'd learned from my father's hapless example—I got behind the wheel and drove up to the job site with a crystalline clarity that would have scared me in any other state of mind. There was an aluminum ladder there, and I focussed on that—the picture of it lying against the building—until I arrived and hauled it out of the mud and tied it to the roof of the car, without a thought for the paint job or anything else.

When I got back, I fumbled in the rain with my overzealous knots until I got the ladder free and then I hauled it around back of the apartment building. I was drunk, yes, but cautious, too—if anyone had seen me, in the dark, propping a ladder against the wall of an apartment building, even my own apartment building, things could have got difficult in a hurry. I couldn't very well claim to be painting, could I? Not at night. Not in the rain. Luckily, though, no one was around. I made my way up the ladder, and when I got to the level of the bedroom the odor hit me, a rank fecal wind sifting out of the dark slit of the window. The cat. The cat was in there, watching me. I was sure of it. I must have waited in the rain for fifteen minutes or more before I got up the nerve to fling the window open, and then I ducked my head and crouched reflexively against the wall. Nothing happened. After a moment, I made my way down the ladder.

I didn't want to go into the apartment, didn't want to think about it, didn't know if a cat that size could climb down the rungs of a ladder or leap twenty feet into the air or unfurl its hidden wings and fly. I stood and watched the dense black hole of the window for a long while and then I went back to the car and sat listening to the radio in the dark until I fell asleep.

In the morning—there were no heraldic rays of sunshine, nothing like that, just more rain—I let myself into the apartment and crept across the room as stealthily as if I'd come to burgle it. When I reached the bedroom door, I put my eye to the peephole and saw a mound of carpet propped up against an empty cage—a den, a makeshift den—and only then did I begin to feel something for the cat, for its bewilderment, its fear and distrust of an alien environment: this was no rocky kopje, this was my bedroom on the second floor of a run-down apartment building in a seaside town a whole continent and a fathomless ocean away from its home. Nothing moved inside. Surely it must have gone by now, one great leap and then the bounding limbs, grass beneath its feet, solid earth. It was gone. Sure it was. I steeled myself, pulled open the door, and slipped inside. And then—and I don't know why—I pulled the door shut behind me. ♦

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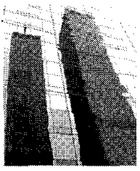

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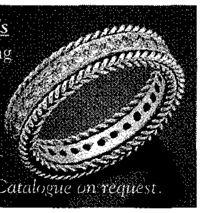

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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

DEEP FOCUS

Cecil Beaton's photographs flattered their subjects; his diaries did not.

BY THOMAS MALLON

The Hepburn most associated with Cecil Beaton is Audrey, whose "purity and integrity," whose "enormous understanding, tact and . . . willingness to learn" he hymned throughout "Cecil Beaton's 'Fair Lady' " (1964), the published diary of his time in Hollywood designing sets and costumes for the film version of the Lerner and Loewe musical. In "The Unexpurgated Beaton" (Knopf; $35), the diaries that the designer and photographer kept during the nineteen-seventies, his last decade, it's the other Hepburn who shows up, and the result is, to say the least, a corrective to the more hagiographic recent obits: "She is the egomaniac of all time . . . a raddled, rash-ridden, freckled, burnt, mottled, bleached and wizened piece of decaying matter." The star of Broadway's "Coco" prefers to keep everyone's dressing room near freezing (" 'I don't care a shit about the girls' "), and during the musical's tour reacts to the death of its subject, Coco Chanel, "by asking how the weekly takings were." Beaton, the production's designer, endorses someone's view that the only place for Katharine Hepburn is "Bellevue Hospital in a straitjacket."

None of this appeared in a previously published selection of the author's last journals, and it certainly leavens the current version, preoccupied as it is with the details of Beaton's own illnesses and deterioration. The editor, Hugo Vickers, the author of a 1985 biography of Beaton, does nothing to stanch the torrent of medical frankness that was unleashed by heart trouble and a prostate operation. A lifetime of dandyism more or less inverts itself as the diarist's famous eye becomes as sharp for a sag of flesh as for a silky flounce. Hormone therapy has enlarged his breasts and miniaturized his penis; his stomach appears to him "like a horrible drained pig, pink and swollen."

There can be no more squeezing himself into clothes a size too small, a practice he'd always thought flattering, and which mimicked a life of trying to squeeze himself into the top social drawer. Growing up in Hampstead, in unremarkable comfort provided by his father's timber-selling business, Beaton got his start as a photographer by taking glamorized pictures of his mother and sisters and sending them, along with equally glamorized accounts of Mrs. Beaton's activities, to the society-page editors at the local newspapers. After Harrow and Cambridge, he partied assiduously with the bright and the theatrical in London, where he began to do steady work for *Vogue*, taking pictures and making sketches and writing small bits of copy to accompany them. He strove for recognition by the same people he was airbrushing like some modern, mechanized valet. His diary for 1929, taking note of his arrival in New York, at the age of twenty-five, mentions crowds "waiting to welcome everyone but me," and the following year he felt "speechless with inferiority" before Noël Coward, envying the entertainer's varied and effortless-looking career.

Beaton's own strenuous efforts would get him further ahead—and farther afield—than some of his early acquaintance might have bet. His wartime photographs of R.A.F. bomber pilots and injured children proved to be a distinguished surprise, and throughout the late forties and early fifties a string of startling designs for Alexander Korda's films, Frederick Ashton's ballets, and Binkie Beaumont's stage productions gave him a new dimension of fame. Irony almost never entered his photographic field of vision—the idea was to make his sitters better than their best—but his theatrical costumes and sets usually managed to send up whatever era he was bowing down to. In particular, Edwardian dress and upholstery were fit for both laughter and awe—overblown and still somehow strictly contained.

He kept himself in the company of the famous and the rich: he offered them validation of their own supposed stylishness; he got luxurious holidays and the chance to keep his patrons in front of his lens. One book of his photographs, with text by Kenneth Tynan, was called "Persona Grata" (1953), the category he most desired to occupy.

A near-constant anxiety—the opposite of the achieved, settled look he brought to photographs and stage sets—suffuses the diaries. In 1970, Beaton wonders, as much from careerism as from despair, whether it wouldn't have been better to die after the prostate operation; he has just won a Tony for "Coco" (all the sweeter for Hepburn's having lost in her category), and if he "went out now it would be on a high note." But at this point he hardly knows how to stop working his ticket. He must make his living and stay "on the crest." So for several years more, up until a serious stroke, he keeps sketching and snapping the shutter and singing for his supper, remaining acquainted with the young and successful, from Rudolf Nureyev to David Hockney, and stuck to the rich like a talking sequin. We see Beaton enduring the moods and condescension of such mil-

A near-constant anxiety—the opposite of the achieved, settled look Beaton brought to photographs and stage sets—suffuses the diaries.

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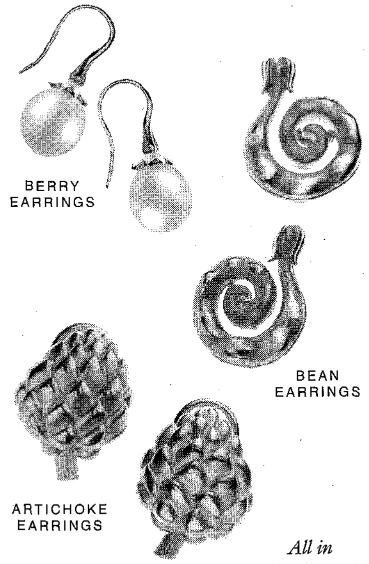

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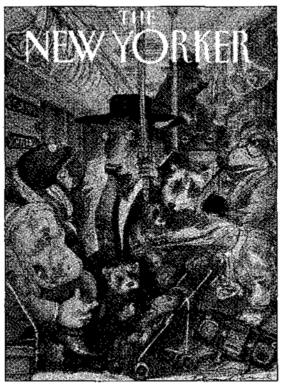

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lionaires as "the martinet crosspatch," Charles Wrightsman, who, for two weeks on his yacht, "forbade one to walk on deck with wet feet, to put on oil for sunbathing, to take the newspapers to one's cabin." What a relief to go back there with his diary and sink his teeth into the hand that's overfeeding him.

Beaton's most important patron was the Queen Mother, who in 1939 gave him his first royal photography commission. He described the bustle of the palace shoot quite wonderfully in an early volume of the diaries: "Housemaids, busy with their dusters, hurried through baize doors." The photographer stole a handkerchief from his sitter, about whom there would always be "something of the great actress." By 1970, when she's become a "pink cushiony cloud," the Q.M. can tire Beaton with her "overworked" facial expressions and performance. Still, he decides with fondness, she's "naturally affected"—a high compliment from a photographer who was always trying to stylize the essential.

The present-day monarch, who gave Beaton his knighthood in 1972 ("She seemed anxious to get rid of me as fast as possible"), struck him at that time less as an actress than as "an extremely good hospital nurse or nanny," but his assessment of her was usually more generous. During the 1953 coronation, Beaton found the new Queen's hands to be "those of an artist, a ballerina, a sculptor or surgeon"; two decades later, presiding over a dinner at Windsor Castle, she's "positively dazzling . . . a great star." One female royal who doesn't leave him undone is Princess Margaret—now "alone and lonely, very matronly"—perhaps because her husband, Lord Snowdon, is part of the photographic competition. The widowed Duchess of Windsor, still without her H.R.H., receives a measure of brutal sympathy: "She should live at the Ritz, deaf and a bit gaga. It is sad because age is sad but her life has not been a commendable one, and she is not worthy of much pity. But still I liked her and will try to be loyal, for she was always good to me." If not his sovereign, she remained a portion of his lifetime's bread and butter.

However wide the generational span of Beaton's acquaintance—the full run of his diaries takes us from Mrs. Patrick Campbell to Bianca Jagger—what's most remarkable about the journals is the gradual darkening of individual portraits over time. In the nineteen-forties, Beaton rhapsodizes about the looks and wit of Lady Diana Cooper; by 1960 he is noting her transition from a great beauty to a great character; and in "The Unexpurgated Beaton," a dozen years later still, she's infirm and sometimes drunk, testing all of Beaton's longtime affection:

> At dinner Diana was projecting and furious if the conversation was not general, i.e. all listening to her. The same old stories—Paul Getty, Penelope Betjeman's TV appearance, the notes she leaves to traffic wardens on the window of her car. Yes, we've heard them so often. Artemis still smiling. . . . I know it must be terrible to have been the most sung-about beauty, to get old, I know how plucky she is, feeling she must keep the flag flying.
>
> My heart goes out to her. That only makes it all the worse for me to suffer and see her being, of all the things she dreads, a bore!

Beaton's clear-eyed, ambivalent sketches of decrepit glamour—we similarly encounter Nancy Mitford, Noël Coward, John Gielgud, and Marlene Dietrich ("a sort of mechanical doll . . . with a genius for believing in her self-fabricated beauty")—are the best of what's in these last diaries. Their well-regulated blaze brings to mind Beaton's grandest achievement as a costumer, the famous black-and-white Ascot scene in "My Fair Lady," where the stark contrasts resolve themselves into a stunning, oddball beauty.

In his judgments upon their dress and face and form, Beaton honors the women who passed through his life with an unsparing literal regard. He is here to estimate, not esteem. His physical inspections have a kind of naturalist's neutrality. The subject always seems to stand before him not in the studio or fitting room but in some zoo or museum. In earlier diaries, one princess is "parakeetish," a duchess is "yeasty"; Colette looks like "an old chinchilla marmoset," Ruth Gordon like "a little Burmese idol studded with bulbous jewelry." Even Audrey Hepburn, ten years before "My Fair Lady," is "a new type of beauty: huge mouth, flat Mongolian features, heavily painted eyes, a coconut coiffure, long nails without varnish, a wonderfully lithe figure, a long neck, but perhaps too scraggy." In this final volume, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands looks "nice and cosy and sympathetic in spite of her ugly little face with unseeing small eyes and pig snout. Her hair was fluffy and pretty." His own sister, dying from cancer, is "now grey as a lizard, and yet after the first shock the effect is very beautiful." Beaton's visual gift is to recognize the grotesque not as distortion but as what individuates us, makes us true and perhaps even interesting.

The acid test of that would be not Katharine Hepburn but Greta Garbo, the chief object of Beaton's worship in his middle years. Although Beaton once said that he was "appalled to realize how much her appearance sways my affections," the reader will find that Garbo, too, got fixed to the page like a specimen. There she is, looking "almost simian" in a diary from the nineteen-forties, out to dinner "with untidy hair and large, smudged, red mouth."

Beaton admitted to being obsessed with the actress even before their first meeting, in 1932, when he was taking photographs in Hollywood. He didn't see her again for fourteen years, at which point, in New York, the two of them embarked on a claustrophobic, creepy romance. One might suppose that this affair, which was apparently consummated, marked some homosexual pinnacle in the history of heterosexuality, and yet it seems finally more suited to the annals of collecting than of romance. Beaton consistently uses military terms ("campaign," "offensive," "conquest") for his pursuit, but the reader imagines something more archeological: the diarist in a pith helmet, venturing into an underground tomb in search of the mummified goddess. "I would have liked to ask the hotel maid not to tidy the room. I did not want her to puff out the cushions"—Garbo had just leaned on them—"but to preserve them just as they were now, or to cast them in bronze for always." Beaton proposed marriage to the actress, and offered her "salvation" from the despised fame that left her vulnerable to autograph hounds and "hooligans." But Garbo, through alternations of passive aggression and outright cruelty, kept him at bay almost as successfully as she did her sidewalk pursuers.

Beaton's sex life had always been rather wan and spotty. At Harrow, where he remembered himself as "frightfully pretty and luscious," he had repelled the advances of older boys; at Cambridge, he resisted less stoutly. He made forays into heterosexuality (one of them with Adèle Astaire, sister of Fred), but as a young man the great target of his unrequited ardor, with only normally unhappy results, was a rich art patron named Peter Watson. Even so, the energy Beaton spent on romance was nothing like the energy he spent on his career—until Garbo, where to some extent career and romance overlapped. (He rarely ventured into the tomb without his camera.)

The forties diaries proclaim Garbo's "towering personality," though what comes across is something damaged and arrested and, in the end, a little tedious. Beaton's notations of her idiolect and accent (" 'Valuable' became 'vuarghluobbhle' ") are more convincing than his judgments of her character, which are based on shared activities in which Beaton seems more chivalric or sisterly than truly ardent. The two of them visit antique shops under the Third Avenue El; they get mud packs together. The real thrill for Beaton is the ever-present threat of banishment. He holds on by his fingernails, awaiting Garbo's disapproval, "fighting for [his] life" when she tells him not to telephone.

Inevitably, the affair, such as it is, dies out. Beaton goes home to England, having been permitted to look at, and even touch, the idol but not to take it with him. His greatest consolation was that people knew. One recalls his attendance at the ballet when he was a schoolboy, something he recollected decades later: "It was as if I had established a sexual rapport with Pavlova and it had been watched by the whole audience."

The seventies gave Beaton the chance to mount a retrospective of the Garbo romance. While living at his Wiltshire country home—and going through the late, gently sorrowful stages of a much realer relationship, with a younger man who taught art in California—Beaton continued overseeing the publication of his heavily revised diaries, a process he had started in 1961, with "The Wandering Years," which covered 1922-39. Along the parallel tracks of living and editing, the early seventies had brought him up to the forties, and a good bit of the new "Unexpurgated Beaton" devotes itself to his crisis of conscience about printing the old Garbo material. (Unsurprisingly, it's a bit of a career crisis, too: the perceived caddishness of publishing might, he worries, jeopardize his promised knighthood.) He goes ahead,

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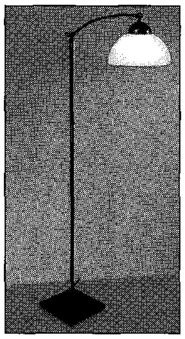

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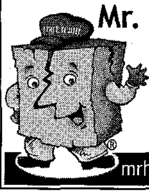

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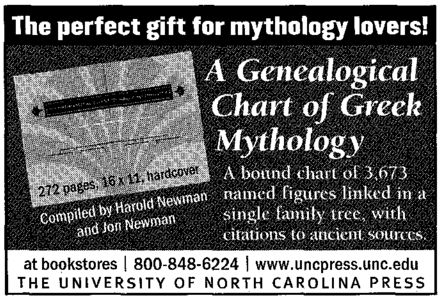
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issuing "The Happy Years" in 1972. He knows he's wrong, and he knows he'd do it again. What he doesn't seem aware of is the way his excitement over people's potential disapproval, especially Garbo's—"I opened the *Telegraph* and saw a photograph of Greta and myself. Oh, no! My stomach went to water. I rushed to the loo"—represents an attempt to revive the old affair's masochistic drama.

Like the other five volumes of diaries (boiled down from a hundred and forty-five manuscript notebooks) that Beaton published himself, "The Happy Years" was so aggressively rewritten that the reader sometimes trips over a tangle of contradictory verb tenses, or bumps into what are, in effect, footnotes that have been made to masquerade as part of the main text. (Beaton hardly needed to tell himself that Diana Cooper's "stage appearances in aid of charity made her known to a wide public.") The author clearly wanted the diaries to be both private consolation and salable commodity. When working on "My Fair Lady," Beaton kept the notebooks he was then filling inside a hotel safe, not because they were too hot to handle but simply in the way he would take care of unprocessed film. The diary became a franchise, an ongoing gig, like royal photography; in 1972, he attended the funeral of the Duke of Windsor, whom he hadn't much liked, only because he thought it would yield a good entry. Where the famous were concerned, Beaton made sure to record not only what engaged him but also what would please customers coming back for the next volume: eighty-year-old Rose Kennedy asking his advice about false eyelashes; the Queen Mother discreetly watching other diners to see which fork she should use for lobster.

A small degree of revision and smoothing out is always desirable in a published diary: a sense of authenticity and "immediacy" is seldom worth someone's flabby grammar or hasty phrasing. When it comes to truthfulness, however, Hugo Vickers has done the diarist a favor by letting rip much of what was held back from the last volume Beaton published while he was alive. Only now do we get the angry Tory politics; the author's detestation of Sir Laurence Olivier ("What a coarse creature he is!"); the gaucheness of one British ambassador's wife ("When she produced her own paintings one realised the full impact of her lack of taste"). Death—what a diarist is usually trying to cheat—always ends up being his best friend, a release into candor and the peace that lies beyond litigation.

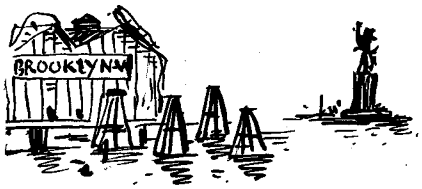
In Beaton's costume and stage designs, more was usually more, but, against some other diarists of the era, it may be useful to note the ways in which he was less: less performingly bilious than Evelyn Waugh (a "swine" who bullied Beaton at school); less constantly put-upon than James Lees-Milne; less self-consciously Wildean than Quentin Crisp; less plain-spoken and seedy than J. R. Ackerley—even if Ackerley's romance with his dog was every bit as peculiar as Beaton's with Garbo. Beaton's prose is far less gee-whiz and anesthetized than that of Andy Warhol, another visual artist who found secondary fame as a diarist, though when Beaton is writing about Warhol one finds him falling into what he more than once recognized as a habit of "subconsciously imitating" the speech and expressions of whomever he was around. "He looks very young and very healthy under his make-up," Beaton writes of Warhol in 1972, before proceeding to sound just like his simple-sentence-writing subject: "He is very original and tonight he talked a great deal. He said we should all go on his tour of the hotels of Europe. He asked who of the group was doling out the dope. He took pictures with a 10 dollar Polaroid." (Fourteen years later, Warhol's own diary shows him "reading the biography of Cecil Beaton. I'm in it a lot when I knew him.")

Proudest of his photography ("To the young generation I have become an old master"), Beaton sensed the ephemerality of his other endeavors, such as stage design. Picasso might, he thought, be for the ages; "lesser fry" like himself would prove perishable. But it is often the lesser fry of literature and politics and art who write the better diaries. The genre allows writer and reader a holiday from complex structure and sustained reflection; cleverness generally does better on its pages than brilliance. As a nervous, if arrogant, striver, taking anxious heed of everyone's doings and detached note of everyone's looks, Beaton was dressed for success in the form. There's no epic sweep to the life he lives and gives us; it's only the daily grind. But he regrinds it fine enough to glitter. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Train, *by Pete Dexter (Doubleday; $24.95).* Dexter's novels, such as "Paris Trout" and "The Paperboy," tend to inhabit thriller country, but their dark lyricism and an inspired disregard for traditional plot carry them beyond this generic territory. "Train" is set half a century ago in Los Angeles, where a black teen-ager, nicknamed Train, is a caddie at a swank golf course. The golfers treat Train poorly, with the conspicuous exception of Miller Packard, a cop who recognizes Train's intelligence—and his golfing talent—and eventually enlists him in a golf hustling enterprise. Meanwhile, investigating the murder of a millionaire on a yacht, Packard becomes involved with the victim's beautiful widow, and Train soon moves in with them. Dexter's skill resides in keeping an atmosphere of menace close to the surface at all times, so that the violent collision of the worlds surrounding Packard seems inevitable.

Waxwings, *by Jonathan Raban (Pantheon; $24).* Raban's second novel, which takes place amid Seattle's dot-com boom, satirizes the formerly sleepy city, its provincialism veneered by new wealth. Tom Janeway is an introverted British novelist and writing professor, whose wife, enriched by her job at a Web site, has left him. With his aged house rotting around him, Tom hires Chick, a recent illegal immigrant from China, to do repair work. Chick inveigles his way into Tom's household, enabling Raban to show the parallel struggles of wo hapless outsiders adjusting to their adopted country. The novel succeeds in skewering a city so eager to amplify its own celebrity that even riots and terrorist plots become matters of pride. But while Raban writes with energy and incisiveness, his characters are thinly drawn, and his well-phrased sallies seem wasted on such familiar marks as the follies of the technology bubble and academic snobbery.


BROOKLYN N.Y.

City Room, *by Arthur Gelb (Putnam; $29.95).* When Gelb was still a copyboy at the *Times*, he edited a chatty internal newsletter called *Timesweek*, and this voluminous memoir suggests that although he rose to become managing editor, he retained a taste for his old job. His account of five decades at the paper is rich with personalities—from the wartime rewrite men, who had shrapnel in their backs and scorn for college boys, to the sixties-era female reporters who shook up the city room with frank language and countercultural convictions. Gelb is generous with praise, but not above a little score-settling—accusing his rival, Scotty Reston, the longtime Washington bureau chief, of having missed the Watergate story because he was too busy palling around with the White House élite to maintain contacts in the police department. Gelb also enjoys dishing vintage gossip, and cites a once popular dictum: "Liquor is the curse of the *Herald Tribune* and sex is the bane of the *Times*."

The King of California, *by Mark Arax and Rick Wartzman (PublicAffairs; $30).* This meticulous narrative of the rise of the cotton magnate James G. Boswell begins in the nineteen-twenties, when his family was driven from Georgia by boll-weevil infestations and brought its plantation ways to California's San Joaquin Valley. Not to be defeated by nature again, the Boswells leveed and dammed Tulare Lake, the largest body of fresh water west of the Mississippi, to the point of extinction. In its six-hundred-square-mile basin they grew cotton, while in Los Angeles office towers they built one of the country's largest agricultural operations, swallowing small farms and multimillion-dollar subsidies with equal vigor. Arax and Wartzman strive for evenhandedness but acknowledge the costs of Big Ag—such as evaporation ponds with selenium levels so high that ducks are born with corkscrewed beaks and no eyes, and the recurrent "hundred-year floods," stubborn attempts by the old lake to reassert itself.

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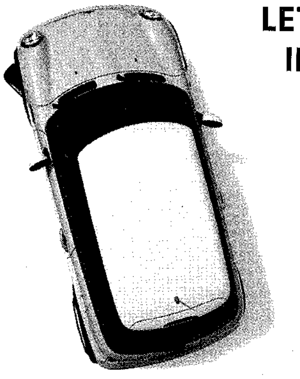

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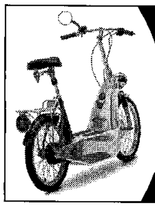

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THE ART WORLD

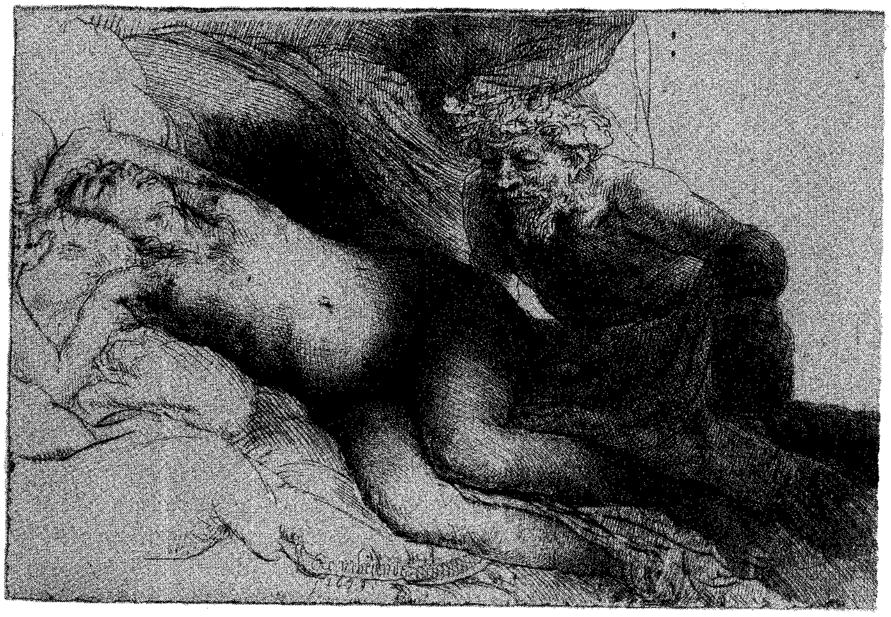
STORY LINE

Rembrandt in Boston.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

"Rembrandt's Journey: Painter, Draftsman, Etcher," at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, is a large exhibition of mostly tiny pictures—about a hundred and fifty prints interspersed with thirty-five drawings and twenty-three paintings, only one of which warrants being called a masterpiece: a 1659 self-portrait, from the National Gallery in Washington, in which the fifty-three-year-old painter appears both careworn and radiantly alive. But a Rembrandt show is a Rembrandt show: a chance to revel anew in the genius of perhaps the most interesting or, to be exact, the most interestingly interested visual artist who ever lived. His talent and skill seem limitless, but we are never solicited and are rarely even permitted to stand back and admire them. They are always busily employed in getting to the bottom of something. It might be the quirk of a portrait sitter, the comic or tragic irony in a drama, or the depth charge of a religious subject. Rembrandt is a detective. When I look at his pictures, I feel like Dr. Watson bumbling along behind Holmes. Once exposed by the master, mysteries become as plain as day, but I know that, on my own, I would have missed the clues ten times out of ten.

A mystery for Rembrandt may take the simple form of what something that he has not experienced is like. What is it like to commit murder? In a swift sketch with brown ink, Cain kneels on his supine, terrified brother, whose barely indicated face is eerily specific, like that of someone you dimly remember. The athletic killer parts Abel's defending hands with one arm and raises a jawbone with the other. Rembrandt has thickened the contour of the weapon, giving it the right weight to crush a skull at one blow. The drawing establishes that murder requires concentration, a sure method, and sudden energy, and that it hurts. Of course, this isn't just any homicide. It's the first—a cosmic disaster. Faintly limned in the sky, God rests his chin on one hand and observes the event with sombre detachment. Did this image strike Rembrandt as a bit fey? He added a balancing note of horror: a dog eats the remains of an animal that Abel has sacrificed on an altar. Looking at the drawing, you reconstruct the artist's thought and share his satisfaction. If you're like me, you also tremble a little. Rembrandt's courage daunts.



"Jupiter and Antiope" (1659). Was Rembrandt's art the movies of its day?

"In selecting the works there has been a special emphasis on Rembrandt the storyteller," the show's head curator, Clifford S. Ackley, writes in the catalogue. It is a welcome stress, aimed at a lingering blind spot in modern taste. Pejorative senses of "illustration" (the qualifier "mere" goes without saying) and the "literary" have embarrassed overeducated viewers of Rembrandt for a century. Like low-down realism—the other pole of the Dutchman's magnet—poetic narrative is close to anathema in most modern theories of art. Great artists who have embraced it—Edvard Munch, Edward Hopper, Picasso in his distinctly Rembrandt-influenced etchings—suffer the peculiar fate of being well loved and poorly explicated. Modern art criticism long ago discarded the tools of participatory imagination that, today, belong chiefly to movie critics. Was Rembrandt's art the movies of its day? You may say so if you're careful to add that it also performed functions of photography, fiction, theatre, theology, and social anthropology—all with an individualism that engendered continual audacities of technique and style. (Often, you know that a Rembrandt is finished only because, at a certain unruly-looking stage, he signed it.) His was a sensibility new in history, born o the freedoms and appetites of a triumphant bourgeoisie. Twentieth-centur types for whom "bourgeois" was a curs had a problem with that.

In a real and delightful way, this mos famous of artists remains to be discovered in the manner that he palpabl anticipated—picture by picture, on viewer at a time. Rembrandt is in th details. The quality for which he is inevitably praised, "humanity," is too nebulous. "Personality" is more like it. Intimate with both subject and viewer, h dissolves emotional distances. The onl halfway boring character in his art i Jesus, who does seem to represent humanity in general for him. What interests Rembrandt in works about Jesus is how other people react to the god-man. The apocalyptic drypoint "Christ Crucified Between Two Thieves" (1653), seen in three versions in the show, conveys Rembrandt's wondering sense of Christianity: the sacrifice of Jesus dropped like a bomb into history, blowing everything askew. In several pictures, he envisions Jesus dead—for example, the limp, heavy body being lowered, with difficulty, from the Cross. Corpses are inconvenient objects. The sight of this one tests belief. Did Rembrandt believe? I think so, but it seems to be the enigma—the fantastic, sheer improbability—of Christ that excited him.

Rembrandt was happiest illustrating the Old Testament, where God is less abstract than in the New. In the print "Abraham's Sacrifice" (1655), an angel grabs Abraham from behind as he is about to slit Isaac's throat. Imagine agreeing to kill your child. The thought wounds. A writer in the show's catalogue decides that Abraham "with a compassionate, protective gesture masks his son's eyes from the sight of the knife." I doubt this. Surely the patriarch is shielding himself from those eyes. Now imagine being tackled in the act. Abraham's face is wild with scarcely nameable emotions, including astonishment at being physically overwhelmed by a youthful androgyne. Abraham is a powerful man. The delicate angel, infinitely stronger, supports as well as restrains him; Abraham may be about to faint. Piling on dramatic detail, Rembrandt renders the landscape of a mountain gorge, the prow of a moored boat, people unconcernedly strolling in the distance, a basin placed to receive Isaac's blood, a ram that God has provided for a substitute sacrifice—all organized pictorially by a diagonal shaft of light from Heaven. The three main figures form a monumental group in echoing, vast space. The print is about six inches high. You can get lost in it.

The show is arranged by genre: landscape, portrait, self-portrait (often in costume and assumed character, like a seventeenth-century Cindy Sherman), and so on. You will want to hear about the naughty bits: Rembrandt's erotica. In each of two prints from 1646, a man goes at it between the raised knees of a woman who grasps and pulls at his hips. One is a monk who has tossed aside his prayer book for the sake of a farm girl in a cornfield, while an oblivious harvester toils in the background. The monk digs his knuckles into the ground for leverage. In the second print, another man, identically posed, is in bed with a contentedly smiling woman who, for some reason, has three arms (one lies at her side, unengaged in the action). He has parked his feathered hat on a bedpost, suggesting that this tryst is a noonsie. In another, spicier work, the aging, satyrlike Jupiter uncovers the sleeping (and almost audibly snoring) Antiope with the unmistakable expression of a connoisseur sniffing a superb wine. The picture, at once refined and gross to a fare-thee-well, is explosively funny.

In saying that Rembrandt's storytelling has been discounted by modern taste, I don't mean that the revered Old Master is controversial, only that he should be. After a century in which our cravings for narrative were attenuated if not shamed in high art, his work has a fresh, even radical sparkle. I came out of the Boston show thinking, in effect, Let's have some more like that. The closest our culture comes is in serious cartooning and, of course, the movies. Art can't rival those vocations for popular impact. But I think that we are already seeing a shift of emphasis in art away from precious self-contemplation and toward eloquent engagement with the world. The means may not be painting. (Just a glance at a Rembrandt may ruin a painter's day.) Video installations by the likes of Pipilotti Rist and Eija-Liisa Ahtila demonstrate the right stuff. It's a question of spirit, not medium. The more alert we are to life in the here and now, the more contemporary Rembrandt feels. He draws us on. ♦

OUR WAYWARD SHERIFFS

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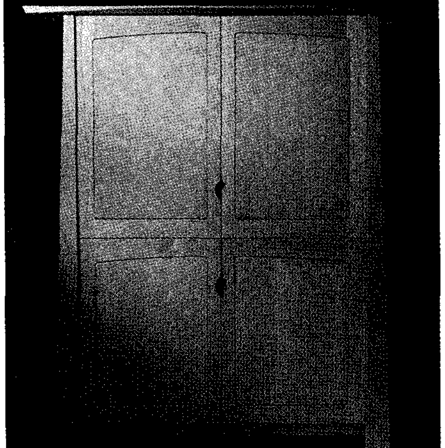

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ON TELEVISION

CALIFORNIA SCHEMING

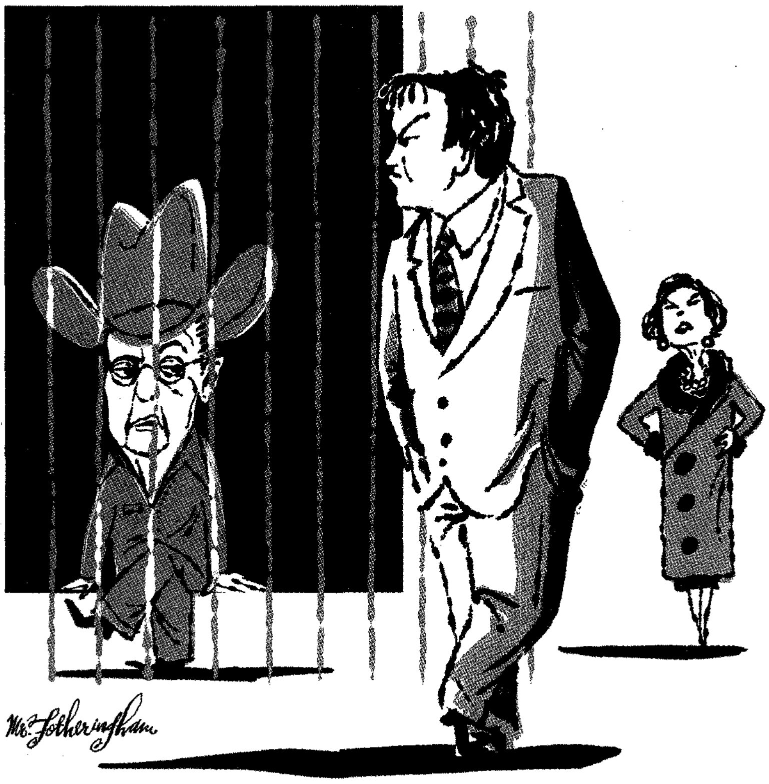
"Arrested Development" and "Kid Notorious."

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

There's a sense of loopy serendipity about Fox's new half-hour comedy "Arrested Development," which premiered on November 2nd. It's the kind of show you want to tell everyone about and yet keep to yourself—if the network finds out how good it is, it may get cancelled. The show is about a family of misfits, ne'er-do-wells, and lawbreakers; the title refers both to the arrest of the patriarch, George Bluth (Jeffrey Tambor), a housing developer, at the beginning of the first episode, and to the stunted psyches of most of the family members. The arrest takes place on a party boat, where George's family is throwing him a retirement bash, and where the one "normal" person in the family, George's son Michael (Jason Bateman), expects to be told that he is being made head of the family business, partly because he, unlike his siblings, actually works there and partly because he's the only one who hasn't been ripping the company off. Set in Orange County, California—the show is suffused with the same moneyed sunshine and materialism that fuel the earnest, soapy Fox hit "The O.C.," and it, too, concerns a character who has engaged in large-scale financial fraud—"Arrested Development" has an energetic, seat-of-the-pants style, which gives its absurdities an air of realism. (It's not a one-camera show, but it feels like it.) The camera functions as a silent character, with a distinct personality and sense of humor. It doesn't dwell anywhere for long, and it makes a lot of good throwaway visual jokes; this light-footedness gives the show a spontaneous and unscripted quality. (It is written by Mitchell Hurwitz, who is an executive producer, too, as are Brian Grazer and Ron Howard; Howard, who provides a voice-over, is also the show's omniscient narrator.)

The Bluths are diverse in their dysfunction—each one is off kilter in his or her own way. In that sense, the show recalls the 2001 movie "The Royal Tenenbaums," but "Arrested Development" has a lively wickedness in place of the movie's depressive chilliness. In addition to Michael, who has a touch of the eccentric about him, too—his devotion to the family business takes the form of living in the unfinished attic of one of the company's model homes with his teen-age son, George Michael (Michael Cera, who's wonderful)—there is his twin sister, Lindsay (Portia de Rossi), who puts on silly fund-raisers, and his two useless brothers. The older one, George Oscar Bluth II, known as Gob (pronounced like the Biblical Job), is a hapless magician who rides around on a Segway and takes umbrage at people calling his store-bought illusions "tricks"; the younger one, Buster, is a perpetual graduate student who doesn't actually seem to know anything (he has studied cartography, but when he looks at a nautical map he says that the blue area is land). Their mother, Lucille (Jessica Walter), identified by an onscreen label as a socialite, is a not very maternal narcissist. When Michael accuses her of favoritism, she insists, "I love all my children equally"; the show then cuts to a scene labelled "Earlier That Day," where she is sitting with Buster and says, out of the blue, "I don't care for Gob." When she sees her maid dragging a fur coat on the floor, she yells, "Luz, that coat cost more than your house!" In answer to Michael's unspoken rebuke, she waves him away with "Oh, that's how we joke. She doesn't even have a house!"

The whole cast of "Arrested Development" is terrific, which isn't, in most cases, surprising. David Cross plays Lindsay's husband, who can't do anything right—not even a high five. A psychiatrist, he has lost his medical license, for performing CPR on a sleeping person and breaking his sternum, and now is trying to be an actor, and he's a ball of high spirits and rage. Tambor's patriarch, in keeping with the selfishness that landed him in jail, finds that he enjoys his captivity. "I'm exercising, I'm sleeping well," he tells Michael, blithely ignoring the bigger picture—that he's left his family bankrupt. Bateman is something of a surprise. Now thirty-four, he appears not to have been wrecked by his teen-star past, and he's the real center of the show (since he's the only grownup who has a center); he's appealingly sardonic and smart, and a sweet father to George Michael.


Go directly to jail: Jeffrey Tambor kicks back in "Arrested Development."

"Arrested Development" isn't just a crazy-family comedy; it does eloquent double duty as a satire of upper-middle-class self-absorption and of the destructive heedlessness of the boom years. (The undeveloped development where Michael and his son have been camping out—a big tract of dirt with one house on it—is called Sudden Valley.) The Bluths' sense of entitlement has allowed them to do what they want to do and go where they want to go, without ever thinking about consequences or quagmires. They're the extreme of American can-doism, which is sometimes a very funny thing to watch, at least on TV.

There are some insects you take care to wave out of the house and some you step on. "Kid Notorious," the Comedy Central cartoon based on the life of the Hollywood producer Robert Evans, is one of the latter. Evans, who was the head of production at Paramount Pictures in the late sixties and early seventies, is probably best known for "The Godfather" and "Chinatown," but he is also famous—legendary, even—for his charm and chutzpah, his womanizing and his high-on-the-hog life style. In a way, he has always been a cartoon—David Thomson, in the 1994 edition of his "Biographical Dictionary of Film," says, in a not unfriendly way, that Evans "seems more a character than a living creature." That was written before the publication of Evans's memoir, "The Kid Stays in the Picture," and before the release of the 2002 documentary of the same title, which revealed him to be both. Did Evans, who is seventy-three, really think that there was anything left to say about his career? Evidently, he did, since he is a full-fledged participant in this surreal, loathsome creation—he's an executive producer of "Kid Notorious," and he provides the voice for his cartoon self. But I put most of the blame on the folks at Comedy Central, who probably thought that it would be cool to hang out with Evans, the way some people think that it's cool to hang out with Hugh Hefner.

Evans has some sense of humor and some self-awareness, but not nearly enough, and whatever charm he may once have had has now curdled into repulsiveness. In the first episode of the show, the cartoon Evans tries to put together a musical version of "The Godfather" with black gangstas; when they fight with one another, he says to them, "Stop bitching, you half-assed bitches. . . . Enjoy yourselves. See them ladies out by the pool? Their legs ain't closed." One of the black guys says, "They're for us?" "Bought and paid for, brother," Evans purrs. The whole point of the musical is to compete with, and crush, a show that a cartoon Sharon Stone is putting on; this is Evans's way of getting back at her for dropping out of a picture he's making. "Kid" 's writers have given Stone's show a title—"Sharon Stone's Vagina"—that enables Evans to make endless nasty sexual slurs about her. In another episode, there's a revenge fantasy having to do with Francis Ford Coppola, who apparently didn't thank Evans when he won an Oscar for "The Godfather." The guitarist Slash, a regular on the show (he seems to be Evans's only friend, aside from his cat), has sex with Evans's big black stereotype of a housekeeper, and he says to her, "I wanted you since the first time I saw you taking the garbage bag out to the curb."

"Kid Notorious" is just no fun, and when it comes to trash-talking egomania and charm this Grandpa Tedious can't hold a candle to that other Comedy Central legend Eric Cartman. Of course, Cartman is eight years old—you expect him to call French people "frogs" and (I guess) to have fantasies about La Toya Jackson and to be obsessed with the size of other boys' genitals. Unseemly as "Kid Notorious" is, one feels a little unseemly going after it. Evans's accomplishments are real and attention must be paid and all that. But the cartoon Evans is asking for it—sort of the way Bobby Riggs was asking for it when he challenged Billie Jean King to a match. Everyone knew that King would beat him, but it was still necessary that she actually go ahead and do it. So I'm sending in my team. Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup: Go get 'im. ♦

THE THEATRE

BITCHES AND WITCHES

Ulterior motives in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" and "Wicked."

BY JOHN LAHR

"I'm a peculiar blend of the Pragmatist and the Romanticist and the crocodile. The Monster," Tennessee Williams said. After the triumph in 1947 of "A Streetcar Named Desire," he dedicated himself to his own greatness; the result was a moral and emotional attrition, which his plays increasingly registered. "I grow less integrated," Williams wrote to a friend in 1950. "I am more alone and more lost than I ever was, and know hundreds more people!" By the time he began to write his masterpiece of the mid-fifties, "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," now in a superb revival at the Music Box, his tally of losses included three consecutive critical failures—"Summer and Smoke," "The Rose Tattoo," and "Camino Real." Williams's embattled situation—his compulsion to lay claim to his literary legacy at all costs—found a fierce and funny reflection in the struggle of Maggie, "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" 's heroine, to seize her own sexual and financial inheritance. "My hat is still in the ring, and I am determined to win!" Maggie says. For her, endurance is everything. "Life has got to be allowed to continue even after the *dream* of life is—all—over," she says. But her appetite for vindictive triumph has turned her, like Williams, into a monster—a fact that she recognizes but can't change. To her aptly named husband, Brick, a frozen and aloof alcoholic, Maggie admits, "I've gone through this—*hideous!*—*transformation*, become—*hard! Frantic!*—*cruel!!*" In Maggie, "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" offers us the first glimpse of the tortured and torturous inner terrain into which Williams had wandered (he called it "the beanstalk country"): a hell of his own making.

This production, directed by Anthony Page, was first mounted in London last year. The transfer to New York has improved it: the characterizations are deeper and more rounded, the tragicomic idiom more luscious and hilarious. The linchpin of both versions is a sensational performance by Ned Beatty, who plays Brick's father, Big Daddy Pollitt, the owner of "twenty-eight thousand acres of the richest land this side of the valley Nile." Beatty exudes a ferocious vigor; he's a dangerous actor, and his prickly spirit catches all the cunning and cruelty of Big Daddy's vulgar energy. With his ivory suit and cigar, he roars his imperialism: "I made this place!" He roars his lust for life: "I'm going to cut loose and have, what is it they call it, have me a ball! . . . Hell! I slept with Big Mama till, let's see, five years ago, till I was sixty and she was fifty-eight, and never even liked her, never did!" And when he learns that his doctor and his relatives have withheld the news that his cancer is terminal he roars his fury at death: "CHRIST—DAMN ALL—LYING SONS OF—LYING BITCHES!"

The play opens on Big Daddy's sixty-fifth birthday, as his predatory family gathers at the Mississippi plantation, hoping to win his favor and his fortune. First among many is Big Mama, who is given a pitch-perfect incarnation by Margo Martindale. A large woman whose charm bracelet jiggles along with the wattles under her chin, Martindale bustles into view with wonderful, foolish brio. In a purple-and-pink floral chiffon dress and blue open-toed shoes, she turns Big Mama into a whirlwind of persiflage and pragmatism. She understands Big Mama's hurt, and she invests her character's bovine banality with a humanity that elevates the heartbroken blather well beyond caricature. The same is true for the shrewd performances of Michael Mastro, as the Pollitts' unctuous older son, Gooper, and Amy Hohn, as his rapacious wife, Mae, a "monster of fertility," who hopes, through her rapid production of children, to raise Gooper's stock as an heir.

The stage at the Music Box is dominated by a double bed in which Maggie sleeps alone. Her goal is to get her reluctant, frigid husband back between the sheets and to conceive a child, thereby clinching Brick's inheritance of his father's kingdom. On an elemental narrative level, the play works as a contest; here, Ashley Judd, as Maggie, and Jason Patric, as Brick, make worthy opponents. Any actress trying to play Maggie has to hit the stage in top gear and stay at speed for the entire first act. Judd acquits herself well. She is technically expert, and she brings to the role her movie-star beauty, her steeliness, and, beneath her ladylike veneer, a brave heart. Something in her metabolism, however, makes her pull back from embracing the extravagance of Williams's speech with an extravagance of spirit. Judd understands the rhythm of Williams's music, but she doesn't yet swing it. She comes closest in the scene in which Maggie tries to break through the wall of Brick's indifference by forcing him to face the possibility that his best friend, Skipper, who recently committed suicide, was in love with him. "One man has one great good true thing in his life," Brick responds, threatening her with his crutch (he has injured himself in a drunken stunt). "One great good thing which is true!—I had friendship with Skipper.—You are naming it dirty!" As he hobbles across the room toward her, Maggie tells him how, one drunken night that culminated in a botched affair, she challenged Skipper: "STOP LOVIN' MY HUSBAND OR TELL HIM HE'S GOT TO LET YOU ADMIT IT TO HIM!" Skipper, it turns out, made the call; Brick hung up on him. Brick can't forgive Maggie for having planted the notion of homosexuality in Skipper's mind; he can't forgive himself for his cowardice, or face his own deeply closeted desires. "Skipper is dead!" Maggie cries out as Brick tries to wallop her with his crutch. "I'm alive! Maggie the cat is alive!"

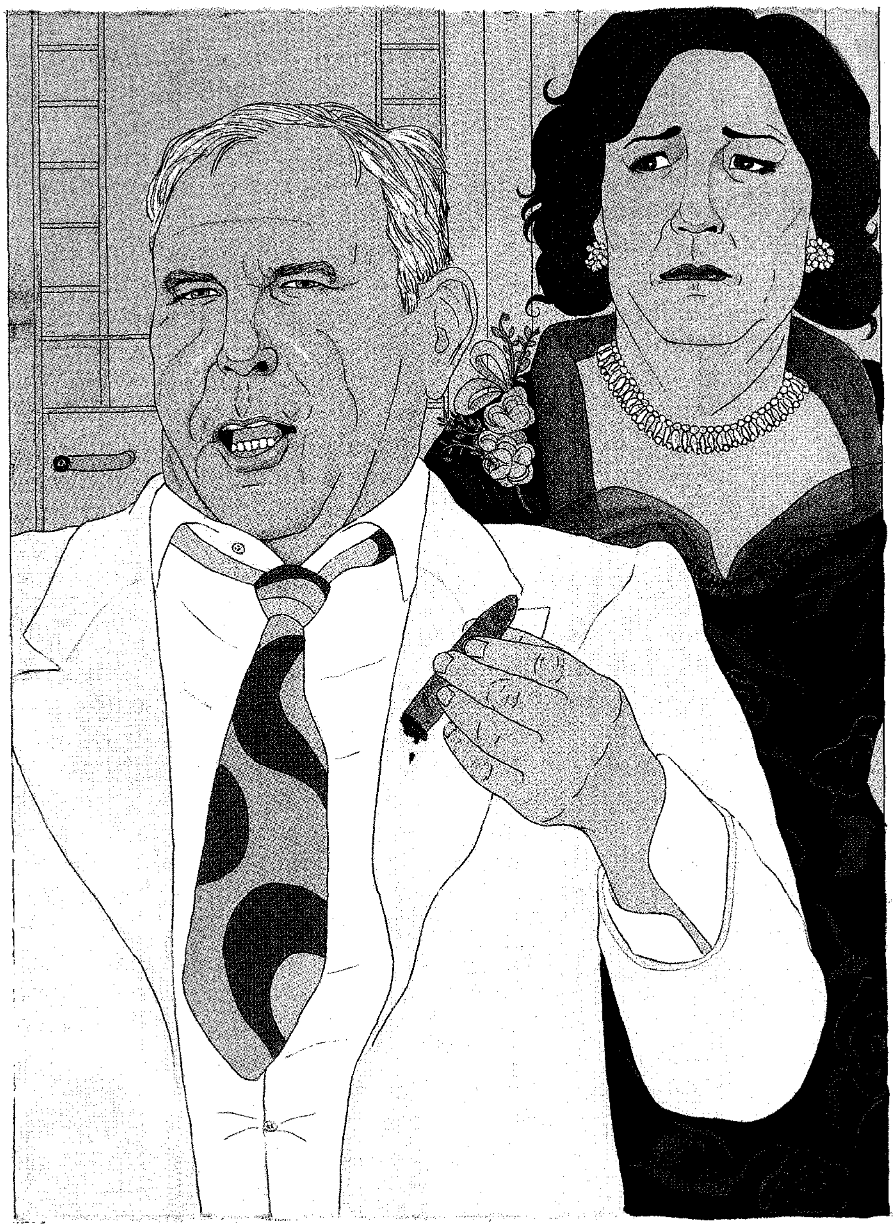
"Mendacity is a system that we live in," Brick tells Big Daddy. "Liquor is one way out an' death's the other." Big Daddy picks up the idea. "Hell, you got to live with it," he says. "There's nothing else to live with except mendacity, is there?" And so it seems. Faced with Big Daddy's imminent death, Maggie lies to him, saying that she's pregnant with

Brick's child. Big Daddy draws her to her feet and feels her body as he embraces her. "Uh-huh, this girl has life in her body, that's no lie!" he says, lying. In this way, the two of them arrange for Big Daddy's favorite son to inherit his kingdom, and maybe even rise to the challenge of adulthood. Mankind, Williams seems to be saying, can't live with too much reality or too much loss. The play ends on an ambiguous, tentative note. "Oh, you weak, beautiful people who give up with such grace," Maggie says to Brick. "What you need is someone to take hold of you—gently, with love, and hand your life back to you, like something gold you let go of." "Wouldn't it be funny if that were true," Brick replies. Unfortunately, for Williams, in the remaining twenty-eight years of his life, that redemption never materialized.

"Who am I?" Williams asked in a late poem. "A monster among angels or angel among monsters." This is the dilemma of personality posed by the musical "Wicked" (directed by Joe Mantello, at the Gershwin), which tells the backstory of "The Wizard of Oz": how the lion got cowardly, how the scarecrow got stuffed, how the tin man got forged, and, most specifically, how the witch got wicked. Based on a clever novel by Gregory Maguire, the musical is an exercise in high camp—a universe turned topsy-turvy, where good is bad, normal is abnormal, and the purest well yields the sourest water. "The Wizard of Oz" was dedicated to hope; "Wicked" is dedicated to irony. Happiness is dramatized as a tyranny, and the Wizard himself is presented not as a charlatan but as a fascist ruling over a principality that does not allow dissent. The Wicked Witch, Elphaba (played by the excellent Idina Menzel), turns out to be good, while Glinda the Good Witch (Kristen Chenoweth) is exposed as a smug, ambitious, manipulative bitch, with little talent for sorcery. So, you see, the emotional stakes of this show are very high indeed.

For reasons both of critical responsibility and of sanity, I think this is as far as I should go with the plot, which has all the suspense of an algebraic equation. Eugene Lee has given the show a spectacular whirligig set; the costume designer, Susan Hilferty, has imposed a wryly surreal Old World look. Winnie Holzman, who wrote the crisp book, seems to have had more fun with the project than most of her collaborators; she has invented a handful of malapropisms ("confusifying," "discoverate," "hideoteous") to send up the sanctimonious Glinda, borrowed some of the film's classic lines to good comic effect, and told the intricate story with a modicum of flair. But the same can't be said of the score. The show's twenty-two songs were written by Stephen Schwartz, and not one of them is memorable. They leave you longing for the wit and playful precision of Yip Harburg, whose words filled the movie Oz with wonder. "Don't be offended by my frank analysis," Glinda sings to Elphaba. "Think of it as personality dialysis."

Kristen Chenoweth, who can hold her high C's and twirl a magic wand like a majorette, delivers the goods. She's a thoroughbred looking for a Broadway race to run. Here, at least, she gets a decent outing. Her extraordinary voice and her knowing humor shine through the morass of overproduction. But no amount of support from old pros like Carole Shelley, Joel Grey, and Norbert Leo Butz can get this musical soufflé to rise—although the audience sometimes does. It is only fair to report that on the night I saw "Wicked" the spectators gave this fourteen-million-dollar piece of folderol a standing ovation, a phenomenon that the musical inadvertently explains in a number called "Dancing Through Life": "Life is painless / For the brainless." ♦



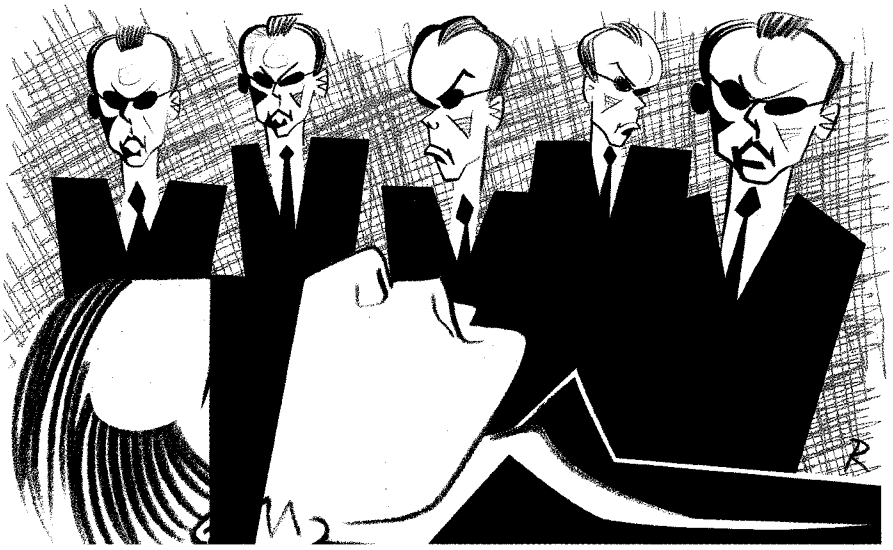
Lies, lies, and damn lies: Beatty and Martindale as Big Daddy and Big Mama.

THE CURRENT CINEMA

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

"The Matrix Revolutions," "Veronica Guerin," and "Beyond Borders."

BY DAVID DENBY



Keanu Reeves, as Neo, with Hugo Weaving, as the self-replicating Agent Smith.

"Not much philosophy there," a real-world philosopher, Colin McGinn, of Rutgers, said to me after a screening of "The Matrix Revolutions" last week. I hasten to add that my own unphilosophical temperament found the picture somewhat more entertaining than the second movie in the series, "The Matrix Reloaded," a noisy sleeping potion administered to the world last spring. But McGinn is right: this time, as in the second movie, the directors Larry and Andy Wachowski have made the intricacies of the original "Matrix" (the play between actual and simulated reality?) secondary to the main events of spectacle, fighting, and stunningly wooden dialogue. At its best, the picture is violently exciting; at its worst, banal and monotonous. Yet the relative absence of mighty significances did not prevent the Matricians sitting all around me—mostly men aged about thirty—from remaining utterly still, as if at a High Mass, throughout the movie. It is, I suppose, far too late to bemoan the obvious truth that these college-educated gents, and millions of others like them, will spend many hours debating the apocalypse as revealed by the Brothers Wachowski but would die before reading a single story by Chekhov or Cheever dealing with the sensual and spiritual quandaries of ordinary people. American men enjoy violent entertainments, and an aureole of religious or speculative mystification surrounding the violence doesn't take a dime away from the box-office.

What the Matricians may not be willing to admit is how many clichéd science-fiction elements were present in the material from the beginning. In sci-fi, the machines are always taking over; pods are always replacing humans; the end of life as we know it is always approaching. "The Matrix Revolutions" is perhaps best described as no more (and no less) than an enormously sophisticated version of the 1953 George Pal classic, "The War of the Worlds." The struggle between machines and humans is coming to a climax: the machine army, going after the remaining humans, who are holed up in subterranean Zion, penetrates the inner shell with enormous steel bores and lets loose the Sentinels—squidlike flying creatures with repulsive razory tentacles. The Sentinels first gather in giant swarms, like the Japanese Zeros at Pearl Harbor, and then make diving attacks on the humans, who frantically shoot them down by the hundred. Meanwhile, Neo (Keanu Reeves), the Redeemer, the One, is fighting his way to a meeting with the machine god, an awesome summit at which, perhaps, a ceasefire will be reached. The movie is most impressive in its re-creation of the metal subworld of Zion—caverns and corridors in grim blue and black, and as cold and wet as a New York subway tunnel in winter. A final one-on-one between Neo and the vicious black-suited "program," Agent Smith (Hugo Weaving), is conducted largely in the air, as a stinging dark rain drenches every blow. Grant the Wachowskis this: they can make a two-hour movie that remains visually interesting, even eccentric, without a trace of natural light.

What they can't handle is language. No one has ever figured out what warriors in future worlds should sound like, and the Wachowskis have a worse than tin ear for dialogue (tin-plated, perhaps). "I'm afraid hope is an indulgence I don't have time for," one of the human commanders says. The question "You know the Oracle?" is greeted with "Everyone knows the Oracle. I consulted with her before I saw the Frenchman." In the first movie, the lifelessness of the humans' speech made one doubt that humanity was actually worth fighting for. But if one ignores the wilder speculative meanings that have been drawn from the series (we are all wired together in a simulated reality), there remains something halfway palpable in these movies: in a period in which gigantic corporations and entire governments devote themselves to promoting made-up realities, people may genuinely wonder what world they are living in. The fact that so many intellectuals in particular found "The Matrix" fascinating suggests how impoten they feel to change anything around them. Movie critics, however, are fascinated by the aesthetic life or death in the object right before their eyes, and they tend to fight one machine or pod at a time rather than recast their helplessness as a theory of subjection. It's better, perhaps, to win or lose small battles than to never start fighting at all.

"Veronica Guerin," the story of the Irish newspaper journalist who exposed the doings of Dublin's drug lords in the nineteen-nineties and then paid for it with her life, is a movie that won't be around much longer, but it's worth running to see it for Cate Blanchett's performance as the hell-raising scribbler. This Australian-born, classically trained theatre actress has appeared in a wide variety of stage and movie roles, but Americans probably know her best as fluorescent Galadriel, Queen of the Elves, in the "Lord of the Rings" movies. Blanchett's wide cheekbones and elegantly sculpted mouth make her a natural for monarchs, goddesses, and good witches, but, as the gleeful and egocentric commoner Veronica Guerin, she's more excitingly alive than she's ever been onscreen. Her Guerin comes off as a smart, tough girl who's also a bit of a danger freak. In one scene after another, she stops some heavy-browed thug on the street and asks him point blank where his money is coming from. Smiling and easy, with a quick turn of her neck, Blanchett flirts her way through the encounter. It's as if she were saying, "You know and I know that you're a slime bag, so why not admit it?" In movies made in the nineteen-thirties, reporters often spoke to scoundrels in a chummy-threatening way, but those journalists were men. When a sexually enticing woman behaves the same way, there's an element of flagrancy in the act. Blanchett has short hair this time, and, in her chic pants suits, she's as lithe and quick as Katharine Hepburn racing around in a Schiaparelli outfit in 1936. She plays Guerin—who has a husband and a young son—as a maddeningly reckless woman who expects to get away with what she's doing *because* she's a woman. She's shocked when the truculent gang leader, John Gilligan (Gerard McSorley), suddenly lunges at her as she shows up at his front door, punching and kicking her to the ground.

Produced by Jerry Bruckheimer and directed by Joel Schumacher, "Veronica Guerin" has been put together with professional skill and bite. Many of the Irish actors are wonderful, and the streets and houses of Dublin, gray and rain-soaked, have a surly authority. But, apart from Blanchett's performance, "Veronica Guerin" is not very interesting. The movie offers a brainless Hollywood version of investigative journalism. Guerin was shot in her car by two gang members on motorcycles on June 26, 1996, and in this movie she's always in motion—the journalist as action hero. But the picture moves so fast that the substance of what she finds out becomes a blur. At this tempo, we don't really understand the key legal issues—why the police and the courts, for instance, are powerless to move against the criminals. What Guerin wrote doesn't interest the filmmakers, either—we never hear more than a phrase here or there. It's difficult, of course, to make a movie about investigative journalism, but Alan Pakula did it in "All the President's Men," capturing the bouts of waiting and record-searching, the blind alleys and failures, without killing the excitement of the chase. Watching "Veronica Guerin," one gets the impression that confronting thugs in person is what journalism consists of. Guerin was a true heroine, but the action-mad moviemakers put in so many similar face-off scenes that they inadvertently turn her into a pest and a monomaniac, and the assassination scene delivers not rage or sorrow but something like relief.

When commercial filmmakers attempt high-minded projects, they crash into the daunting economics of the movie business. Desperate to earn back preposterous budgets, they turn to the broadest, dopiest movie clichés—swelling musical scores and noisy spectacle. They never engage the subject that attracted them in the first place, and they wind up losing the audience anyway. In "Beyond Borders," the charismatic Clive Owen, as Nick Callahan, a surgeon who ministers to the world's mangled poor, makes impassioned speeches to everyone. Tall and dark, Owen has an intimidating, slightly hostile presence. He's paired here with Angelina Jolie, playing Sarah Jordan, a married woman in London who keeps following the fiery doctor to ravaged spots like Ethiopia, Cambodia, and Chechnya. Jolie, her black hair draped around her head—she seems in mourning for her career—purses those enormous lips, and the performance comes lethally close to parody. The director, Martin Campbell, is big on scenes of Third World chaos and fear; there is evidence that at some point this project (which was initiated by Oliver Stone) might have been serious, but Campbell has produced little more than a churning, vivid backdrop for romance. The doctor calls the bourgeois lady a phony, and it turns her on. Their tempestuous moral disputes come off as a kind of relief workers' foreplay. ♦

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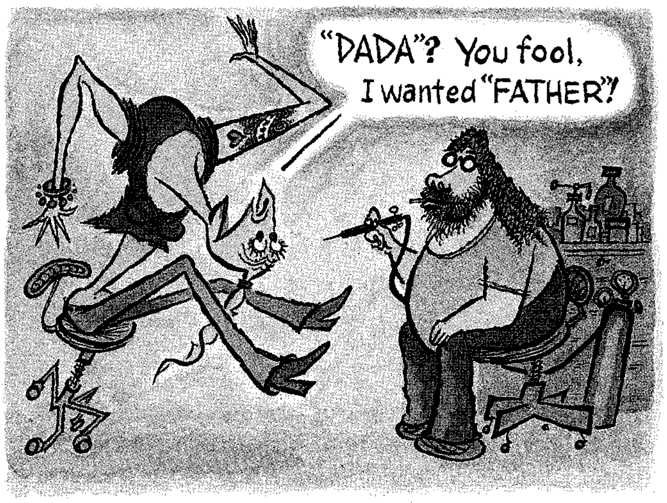
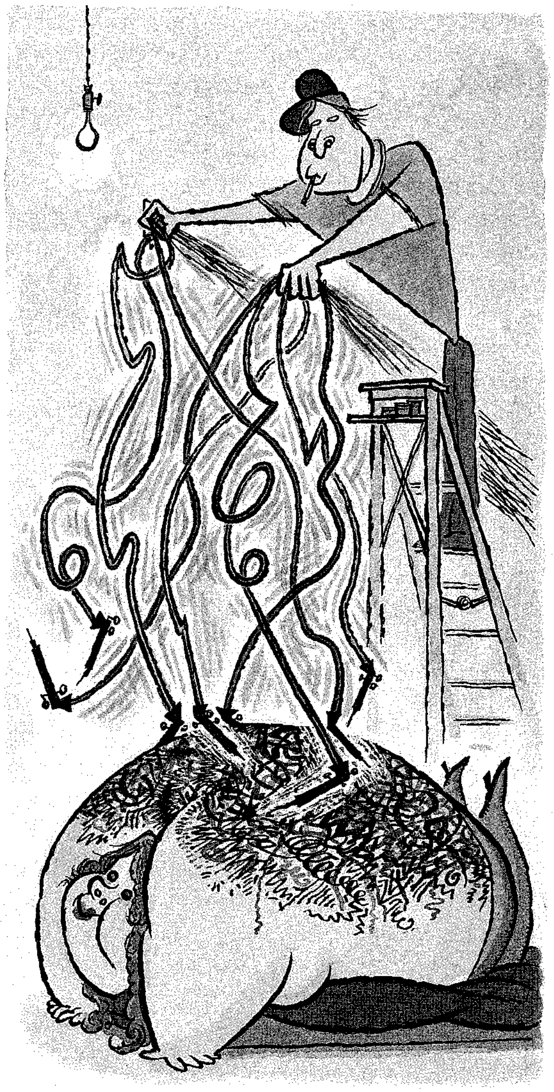
THE ART OF THE TATTOO BY ARNOLD ROTH


"DADA"? You fool, I wanted "FATHER"!

THE DADAIST



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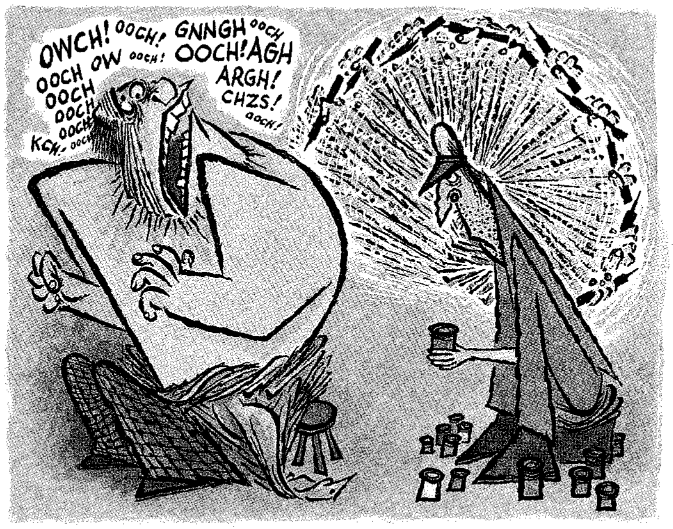
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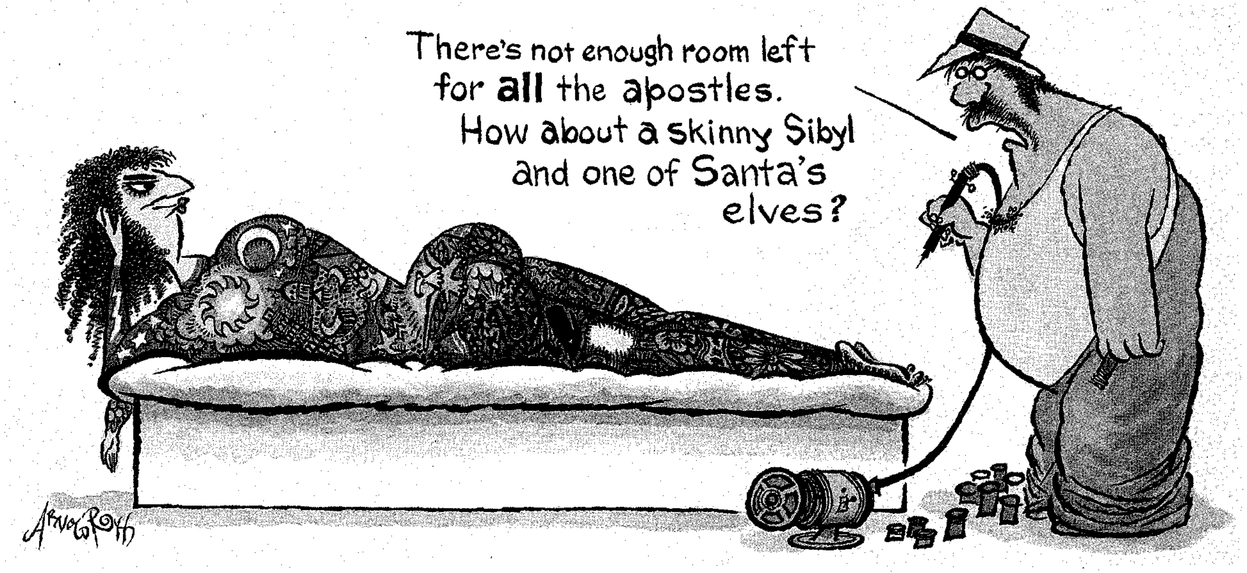
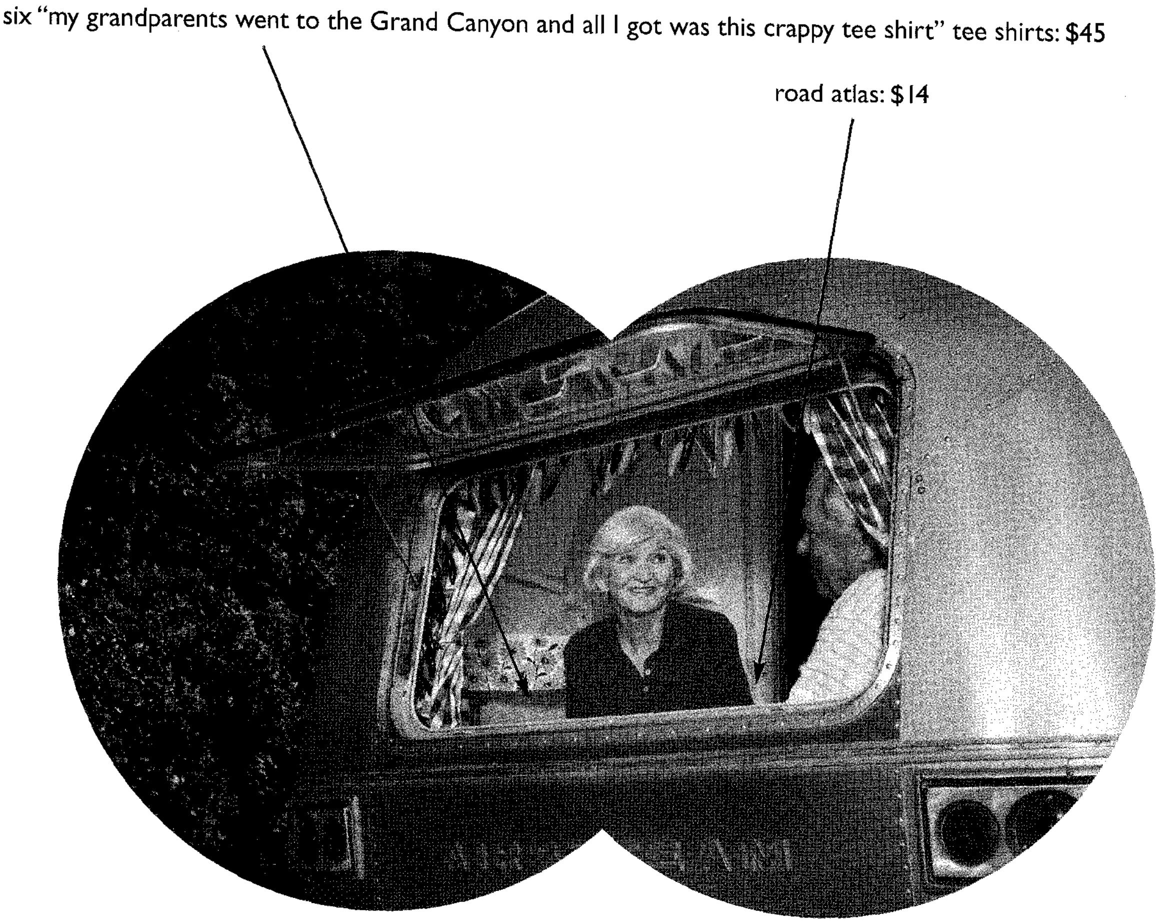

There's not enough room left for **all** the apostles. How about a skinny Sibyl and one of Santa's elves?
ArnoldRoth

THE MURALIST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